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Adventure

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The UNCONQUERED
A Novelette of Morocco
by GEORGES SURDEZ

GORDON MACCREAGH · TALBOT MUNDY · HAROLD LAMB
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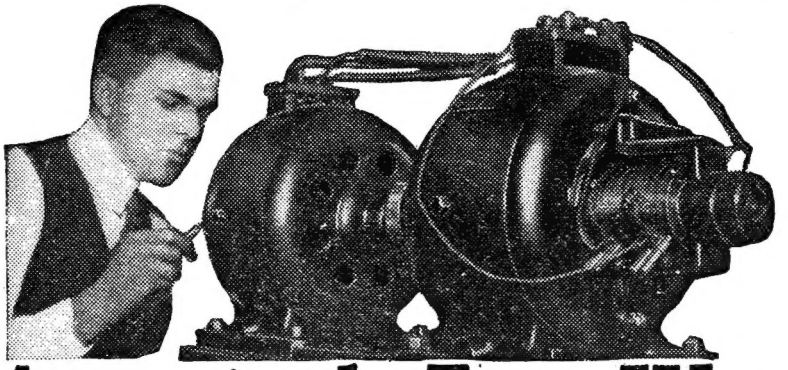

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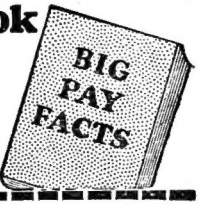

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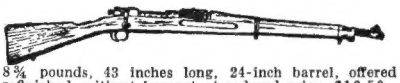

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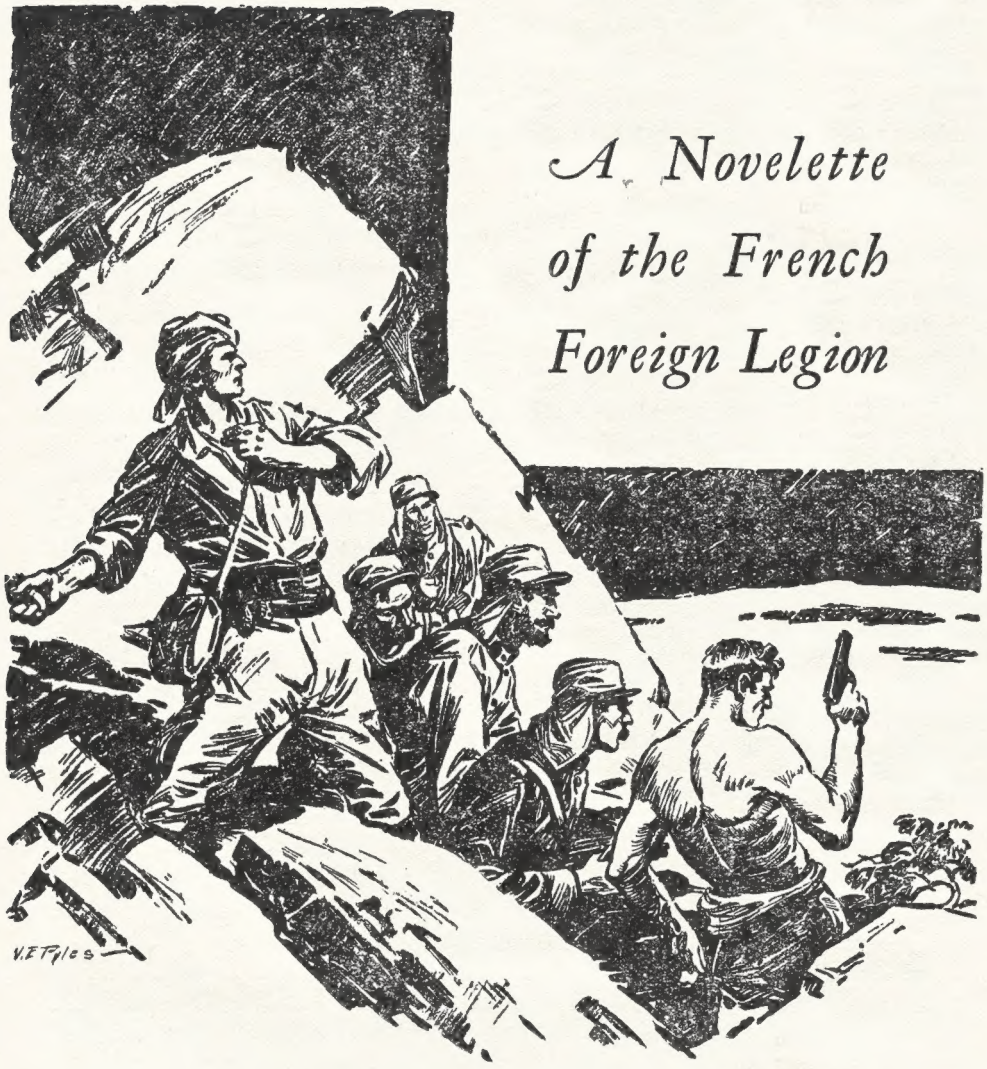


A Novelette of the French Foreign Legion

CHAPTER I

THE OUTPOST

MARTIER came in sight of the outpost of El-Hajez in the Middle Atlas. That rectangle of walls, with the squat bastions jutting out of the angles, would be his home for six months. More if replacement officers were scarce when that term expired; less if a Chleuh marksman took good aim; forever if the aim were precise.

The blockhouse occupied the crest of a high knoll, was a link in the chain that holds back the raiding parties of the dissident mountaineer tribes from the pacified zone of the Moroccan Protectorate. The fog had lifted and the sky, which appeared to have rested flush with the hilltops throughout the early morning like a wadding of dingy cotton wool, had lightened after noon. The sun now

The UNCONQUERED

By GEORGES SURDEZ

stabbed through the rifting clouds in brutal shafts of harsh light, touching the green slopes with glistening varnish, bringing out the patches of wheat and the oat fields in the narrow vales like areas of burnished gold.

The lieutenant did not arrive in romantic fashion, astride a battle steed. He had occupied, since leaving Kenefra headquarters, the left of the front seat of a motor truck, second in a file of six chugging steadily up slope after slope into the sky by a giant stairway of green inclines.

Behind him was a cargo of tinned meats, dried vegetables, flour bags, rice sacks, ammunition boxes. At his side sat the chauffeur, a Legionnaire of the same regiment as himself, who handled the wheel and chatted with that respectful familiarity which is the custom in the Legion.

"El-Hajez," he said, having exhausted many topics on the two hour trip. "The men used to like it a lot, Lieutenant. Now, when there's a scrap and some fellow comes down with holes in his legs or arms, he grins as if he were lucky."

"Yes," Martier replied.

It was a rule with him neither to solicit confidences nor to encourage them. Ever since he had been informed of his assignment to El-Hajez, hints had come his way, which he had refused to probe, unwilling to arrive with his ideas already formed.

But the chauffeur needed no prompting. He nursed his cigaret stub and monologued on.

"They have one great fellow up there—Corporal Hartmann. If he had not been foolish he'd be an officer by this time. Counts five years Legion." He nodded to himself and swerved to follow the leading truck. "Know the tribes hereabouts, Lieutenant?"

"Ait-Worha, Beni-Khadil."

"That's it. They're like all the Chleuhs, only maybe more ragged and lousier. Their women are pure white and very

pretty, if they would wash. White as you or I, Lieutenant—"

The chauffeur evidently thought of his own red face, stubbled with yellow bristles. He glanced at the tanned, gaunt face of the young officer and smiled.

"Whiter, maybe. But that's not what I started to say, Lieutenant. You see that thing—on the hill over there?"

Pierre Martier followed his indication. saw the precise, whitish outline of an isolated watch tower on a crest three kilometers away, resembling nothing so much as an upended match box. He had seen many like it, similar in design and construction, invariably girdled by barbed wire strands; usually manned by a few men under a corporal, entered by a ladder which is pulled up in time of danger and at night.

"Must be tower No. 1—"

"Studied the sector? That's it, all right. Well, you see the telephone poles? Count three down from the tower. There's a spot there from which the mountaineers snipe at the sentries atop that tower in the early morning when a man relaxes too much. Also, for awhile, the natives got pretty fresh with the wood gathering parties. Wounded three men and killed one. A big Polack. I took the body down to Kenefra for burial and he bounced about the truck—the road wasn't near as good as now—all the way. Couldn't stop to fasten him, for if once a truck gets separated from the rest— When we're together, no sign of any one. The minute you're alone, the bushes and rocks sweat Chleuhs. And they're bold just now. After peace was made in the Riff, they got in a lot of modern guns, Mausers mostly. But what was I talking about?"

"Corporal Hartmann."

"With all those ambushes and scraps something had to be done to tame them a bit. So the captain up here—not the one they have now but old man Cortier—asked for volunteers to make up counterambushing parties. Hartmann volunteered and he soon was the best of them all. Led groups out. Took no rifles, but prowled around with himself and his men all dolled up in *gandouras* and turbans, like natives, armed with automatic pistols, grenades and knives."

"The usual free group in use everywhere," Martier commented.

"Hartmann's group wasn't ordinary. It isn't now. And although he's been at it eight months he's still alive. Yet you know that the Chleuhs are nobody's fools when it comes to ambushing. He loses a man once in awhile, but he always wins out."

"Still corporal?"

"Still corporal, Lieutenant. He got two citations from Cortier but since the new captain arrived—well, he's not getting along well with him."

"That's sad," Martier said with calm sarcasm.

"You know Captain Dubroc?"

"Yes."

The chauffeur spat out the stub and abandoned the wheel to light another cigaret. Martier stared gloomily at the rapidly nearing walls.

Captain Dubroc: Second Battalion of the Second Regiment of the Foreign Legion; Martier recalled well his squat silhouette scuttling up the slopes of the Iskratten, with the fusillade of Abd el Krim's cornered regulars pitting the soil about his feet. "Knightly courage", "hero of legend" were the terms of his citations, coaxed from chiefs who were rather familiar with extraordinary bravery.

And long before that, with the March Regiment of the Foreign Legion in France, Dubroc had made for himself a record second to none. The green and red ribbon of his World War *Croix de Guerre* was as long and as studded with palms as that of a crack aviator. Seven palms already ornamented the sky blue and scarlet ribbon of the Colonial Cross. Between a corporal and such an officer—well, little choice existed.

"If you remember—" the chauffeur resumed.

"We'll be there in a few minutes," Martier cut him short.

The line must be drawn somewhere.

The Legionnaire turned his attention to the road, his hard mouth puckered into a ridiculous pout, like a scolded child.

THE GATES of El-Hajez were swung wide. The convoy of trucks entered the vast yard, the center of the rectangle of houses, which were backed against the defensive wall. Fatigue parties were already waiting to unload the trucks, lined behind sergeants armed with notebooks to check off supplies. Martier presented the chauffeur with a few packages of cigarets and a bill, shook hands and dismounted.

"Sergeant Gunther," a non-commissioned officer introduced himself, saluting.

"Lieutenant Martier. Where's the post commander?"

"Captain Dubroc is finishing his *siesta*," Gunther explained without smiling. "But you'll find Sub-Lieutenant Gerval in the office, over there."

Martier crossed the yard. The sun beat hotly on his back and his slender shadow proceeded him, clean cut and black. A hundred-odd yards to the right a picturesque group huddled in the sunshine, natives in blue cloaks seemingly petrified against an ocher wall—the irregular native riders assigned to this post, the Mokhazenis. Their rounded headgear had an odd, tricolored aspect, the red of the ornaments, the white of the cloth, the dark skin.

Crossing a narrow veranda attained from the level yard by three steps, Martier found himself in the open doorway of the scantily furnished room used as an office. Flies buzzed about, alert, familiar. A private in shirtsleeves before a table typed diligently.

At another table, in a corner, a young man was writing. The single gold stripe of a sub-lieutenant cut horizontally across his cuff, moved in time with the faint scratching of the pen. Martier did not speak immediately, attracted by the handsome face, an oval pure and graceful as that of a woman. He noted a high white forehead framed in light brown hair, a long, well modeled nose and a sensitive, very red mouth.

Instantly, however, the sweep of the shoulders, the set of the neck, the ribbons flaming on the left of the olive khaki tunic, revealed the full man, the veteran soldier.

"Lieutenant—" the typist said warningly.

He had seen Martier and rose to his feet. The sub-lieutenant looked up, pushed his chair back hastily and came across the room, hand outstretched.

"Lieutenant Martier? Gerval. They could at least have warned me by telephone from Kenefra that you were coming up today. They use the wire for everything else. Welcome here, naturally. Any sign of the Chleuhs? Good trip?"

"Good trip. No sign, no."

"Fresh from leave?"

"Yes—after two years with the Fourth Regiment."

"What's news in France?"

"Nothing much," Martier replied. "Paris is still in place."

"Been in the Middle Atlas before?"

"Yes. 1922-23."

"You'll soon be up with what's changed. We have one hundred men here. The captain will doubtless put you in charge of the position section—the machine guns, you know. You were in a machine gun company once?"

"That's right."

Gerval had brought a chair forward for Martier, who sat down, flicking the dust from his knees. He saw that the sub-lieutenant was pleased at his arrival, almost exuberant. There was an undertone of relief in his voice:

"It's perhaps a little stricter here than is usual. But you'll get accustomed—"

"Necessarily," Martier agreed.

"You heard nothing about this post before—"

"Hints."

"Yes, you would have," Gerval murmured. He looked meaningly at the typist, who was busy again, but whose pink, wide ears seemed to stretch with

curiosity. "Your room is ready. You'll have only to bring in your trunks. Come and see it."

He rose and Martier followed.

But a new arrival masked the door. Martier had a first impression of a keen glance, almost white, so light blue were the eyes from which it emanated. Then, against the glare of the tawny sand of the yard, he distinguished a big, massive head, a square, swarthy face, gentle, strangely bitter in expression. The man was very tall, wide of shoulder, neatly garbed in his khaki coat, and the lieutenant mistook him, at first, for an officer. Then he noticed the blue sash under the military belt.

"Beg your pardon, Lieutenant."

He saluted with a beautiful precision noticeable even in a corps in which the salute is a rite. Yet, instead of giving way, retreating, he stepped inside the room.

"What do you want, Corporal?" Gerval asked. Then, as if compelled by some quick mood, he presented him to Martier. "Corporal Hartmann, Lieutenant Martier."

Hartmann, calmly, without hesitation, offered his hand, which Martier shook.

"I am honored to meet you, Lieutenant Martier," he said. His voice was soft, deep, with a metallic crispness at the end of the words.

"German?" Martier asked.

"In name only. I am a Russian, Lieutenant."

There followed a perceptible pause, then Gerval repeated—

"What do you want, Hartmann?"

"I was detailed to yard police. The volunteers for the next patrol need coaching with the grenades. Two of them are new at the job—"

"But you're not leading the patrol this week, Hartmann."

"It'll be the same old story, Lieutenant. I won't be going until the last minute, then the men won't go without me. With two or three green men along—you know the captain will order me to go, finally."

"I'll speak to him tonight."

"All right. Anyway, I'll take hold of the men again in the meantime. Another corporal can take charge of the yard."

"If the captain catches you at it, Hartmann, your stripes will go sure."

Hartmann smiled, straightened and saluted impeccably before leaving the room. Martier raised his brows slightly, not quite approving of this casual manner in an inferior. But he remained silent and followed Gerval to his new quarters.

HE WAS to live in a small, square room, lighted by a narrow window high in the wall—for the constructor of the post had been afflicted with a horrible fear of snipers—and furnished with the frame and metal spring of a cot, a shower pan in a corner, sundry receptacles of agate ware scattered on the beaten earth floor. On the walls, patches of brighter white revealed the emplacements of pictures, removed by his predecessor on departure.

"This isn't a palace."

"It's all right, Gerval," Martier said sincerely.

"Nice after you fix it up. I'll show you what I did with my cell later. The mess room is next to yours. We've fixed it up, as usual, with a few books. There's a gramophone—"

"Good cook?"

"Oh, fair. Doesn't get much to work with. The stock is thin, all bones and gristle. Once in awhile the supply sergeant buys a boar from a native hunter; then we have a feast. A lot of custard desserts. Captain is fond of beans, so we have them several times a week—"

"Fond of beans?"

"Matter of principle, old man. Says it kept him strong when he was a private, when he carried a bigger pack than the men do now." Gerval smiled faintly.

"Dubroc's a former private?"

"Private to captain in the Legion. Trained at Gerryville in 1904. Was a sergeant when the war came and a captain when it ended. Don't you know that?"

"Vaguely."

"Never met him?"

"I've seen him from a distance."

"Better learn about him. He'll tell you himself, 'Dubroc and the Legion, the Legion and Dubroc, all one.' Said to be quite nice when you know how to take him. I've been five months trying to find out how." Gerval lighted a cigaret and grinned. "How old are you, may I ask?"

"Twenty-eight."

"Not so bad. Did you serve at the Front, the real Front?"

"You mean in France during the war?"

"Precisely."

"Yes. A year as a volunteer, private to sergeant. Six months as an *aspirant*—cadet. Why?"

"You'll understand later."

"And—" Martier sat down on one of the small tin trunks brought in by the orderlies and motioned for Gerval to imitate him— "as long as I'm at home, sit down. I was about to say: And what about Hartmann? Seems to be rather a strange fellow."

"Hartmann?"

"I'm not blind, Gerval. I'll have to learn the peculiarities of this post somewhere, from some one, sometime. Is Hartmann just one of those self-styled extravagant fellows which we run up against often enough in the Legion—or is he *somebody?*"

"I believe he is somebody, Martier."

"What do you know about him, may I ask?" Martier lifted his hand swiftly as if to still possible protest. "I'm not indiscreet without reason, Gerval, but you must understand I wish to know. One doesn't need to be a mind reader or a prophet to know there's some sort of a row, a feud even, going on between the captain and the corporal. I hate to be in the dark, to know only fragments of the truth, to side wrongly, perhaps—"

"You mean, between an officer and—"

"I'd think awhile before deciding? Yes." Martier offered simply, as an unbeatable argument, "I've been in the Legion eight years, you see."

"True. Here is what I know of Hartmann, as much as any one knows for sure. His full name is Paul Hartmann. He is a Russian from the Baltic provinces. He enlisted a few years ago. He speaks, to my knowledge, French, Russian, German, English, Arabic and the local dialect. He was a corporal after six months in the Legion, a sergeant after a year. Was broken for drinking. Took eighteen months to reach sergeant again. Broken for drinking. Was sergeant again in two years. Broken for drinking. Is now corporal for the fourth time and I proposed him for sergeant a few months ago. Hopeless, it seems, as far as drink goes; he has everything else—education, morale, leadership, courage. That much I know surely. The rest is rumor—"

"Go ahead. I enjoy rumors too."

"He gives his age as thirty-two. Rumor says that he is nearer forty. That Hartmann is only part of his name, that he has a title—baron, count, I don't know what. That he was a captain in the cavalry of the Russian Imperial Army, could wear extraordinary decorations beside those he won with us."

"Bah! The usual yarns about all Russians who clean their nails," Martier commented, unimpressed. "You believe him right in his row with the captain?"

"I'm prejudiced in his favor for personal reasons, so I won't offer my opinion as valid. He happened to be a sergeant of the first section I took into action. I am now twenty-three. I was therefore twenty-one, freshly hatched. You may have had that sensation of stage fright, far harder to control than mere physical terror, that comes the first time you take men under fire, when you feel thirty-odd men looking toward you for life and death. When a mistake may lead to useless killing.

"I did not lose my nerve exactly but I got hopelessly tangled up. The men sensed I was green, were not well in hand, anyway. As luck had it I was cutting my teeth on a rear guard action, one of those nasty skirmishes that may end well, or in a massacre, according to the chief. The natives were closing in fast. Two automatic rifles out of three jammed—it was dusty as the devil—and a runner suddenly comes up to tell me to bear on the

right and fall back upon the other sections of the company."

"Your brain turned to wool and you couldn't think," Martier completed for him.

"You remember how it is. I yelled awhile and nothing happened. Then Hartmann crossed toward me, saluted, and while seeming to ask for orders, gave me the right words to say. Also, seeing him there with his back to half a hundred snipers, calm, polite, everything snapped back to normal. I gave my orders, the groups slid to one side as if by magic and I was inside the other sections.

"I got credit for the job and was cited. I was green, inexperienced, full of notions, and I tried to have the citation go where it belonged. I confessed the whole thing to the major, who advised me to let the matter drop, said that young officers were usually helped thus at first. I insisted and he called Hartmann, who denied having 'consciously' assumed charge. The major dismissed him, laughed and told me to forget it. Hartmann from then on helped me in one way or another until I could do the job myself. Then, to celebrate perhaps, he bought a couple of bottles, drank and lost his stripes. I can not forget."

"Wouldn't be decent to," Martier admitted.

"About the captain—I have nothing but respect for the man he has proved himself to be. I was elated, proud, when he came to take charge. I regarded him with awe, with a deep feeling of veneration. I had heard how he went under fire to pick up a wounded German, nineteen years old, when nobody's head was safe outside our lines. He was the Legion itself, the hero of legend I had read about. Once up here for a couple of weeks—"

"Heroes should not be taken down from their pedestals and looked at too closely, eh?" Martier nodded understanding.

"Perhaps not. Hartmann, on the other hand—" Gerval interrupted himself, looked inquiringly toward the door where an orderly had appeared. "What do you want?"

"Captain wants to see the new lieutenant in the office—" the private repressed a grin, rejoicing in advance at what he was about to say in obeying his instructions— "and he wants him at the double."

CAPTAIN DUBROC was seated at the table formerly occupied by Gerval. He was smoking a short cigar, drumming the table with his big spatulated fingers.

Martier stepped forward to shake hands, then found a chair at a gestured invitation. Dubroc was staring at him, without saying a word, with a puzzled, questing expression. The new lieutenant calmly submitted to this examination and waited.

Dubroc was about forty years old—a splendid man physically. Not tall, certainly below five-eight, but with enormous shoulders swelling the thin cloth of his coat. On the left breast, in a glittering row, were decorations. The blue and red ribbon of the Colonial Medal, from which hung the silver disk bearing the martial, helmeted effigy of France, literally vanished under clasps. Sahara, Far East, the two bars given for Morocco; it might have been a sample at a show window. As Martier saw, for the first time, the two far famed *Croix de Guerre* ribbons Dubroc absent mindedly reached upward with a big pawing hand and flicked invisible dust from enamel, metal and cloth. Absent mindedly, yet with some inner awareness. At the same time his lips moved in an inaudible murmur.

The head was huge, large as a good sized pumpkin, perfectly round. The small ears lay snug to the skull. A bizarre contrast in color startled Martier. The face and neck were tanned like saddle leather, save for the pinkish, unsightly pucker left by a scar. But the scalp was smooth, shining, indecently nude. A more careful examination revealed to him that Dubroc was not bald, but that, for some dim reason of his own, he chose to shave his skull completely. The nose was large, fleshy, reddish; the eyes, deeply sunken

under colorless brows, were round, bulbous, steady and black.

"You're Martier?" Dubroc asked bruskly.

"I am Martier, Captain."

"I am Dubroc. Second Battalion of the Second Regiment."

"*Charmé*—" Martier offered.

"Dubroc, formerly with the March Regiment. Fifteen attacks, five wounds, fifteen citations." Again Captain Dubroc flicked his medals. "How long have you been in the Legion, Martier? Eight years? That begins to count. You served in the war? Fine." Dubroc relaxed visibly. "In that case we shall understand each other. You have decorations?"

"Yes, Captain."

Martier looked down toward his left breast and, perhaps by contagion, lifted his hand as if to flick invisible dust—from invisible decorations. For his tunic bore only the loops of thread through which the tiny metal knobs holding ribbons or badges were to pass.

"Why do you not wear them, Martier?"

"Captain?" Martier asked, somewhat startled.

"I repeat, why do you not wear them?"

"I was at dinner in Kenefra last night in dress uniform, Captain. This morning, when changing for the trip up here, I forgot. I had a borrowed orderly—you understand."

"Perfectly. Yet it is carelessness. You comprehend fully that the mere fact of forgetting them has a bad effect on the men. You—regardless of your motives—seem to take them lightly. Regardless of what others do to obtain medals, in the Legion they are won, well won, and a man should be proud of them."

"Quite true, Captain."

"Don't repeat 'captain, captain' like a parrot." Dubroc slapped the table. "Once will do. I don't take too great vanity in being a captain at forty-three, believe me." The hand flicked upward smartly. "Captain Dubroc, forty-three, fifteen attacks, fifteen citations, Knight of the Legion of Honor—and not yet a major!"

The typist rose and left discreetly. Dubroc lowered his head, his steady eyes fastened on his hands. He looked up again with a winning smile, the smile that melted all antagonism, a man's smile, all frankness and friendliness.

"I'm an old ass," he said, shrugging. "But there are times— Hope you have been made comfortable. Satisfied with your room? I'm fond of plain food, beans, lentils, which give strength without weakening the stomach. Young Gerval, charming lad, you've met him? Well, he doesn't care much for it, but doesn't take the trouble to instruct the cook. I shall not be offended if you modify your fare. If you care to toss into your belly all those canned concoctions, you are at liberty to do so." Dubroc again lowered his head, then spoke bruskly, "You know the wartime Legion. What do you think of it now?"

"If it has degenerated," Martier said with a smile, "it did not show in the Riff. We were ahead of all other troops—by far."

"Surface polish, the last flickers. The Legion is being ruined. Too many young officers; the authorities too lavish with promotions to beginners. Take Gerval. Young, brave, all of that. But too young to be slated for lieutenant, as he is. I am forty-three and not yet a major. Martier, you have been with a machine gun company? Good—you shall take charge of the machine guns. We have eight, as usual; two on each bastion. Also, you shall inspect the automatic rifles. For myself, I do not claim to be an expert on these newfangled affairs. And Gerval is young. Here—" he tapped a sheaf of sheets on the table— "is a report that he is drawing up on the accidents that happen with the automatics here. Bright fellow, he states that in his opinion the model 1924 should be changed. Recommends the employment of the Madsen automatic, which was employed when he first entered the Legion. Any one would know that was true. He wasn't asked for suggestions as to a change in armament, but a report on accidents."

"Yes, Captain."

"We are struggling, here at El-Hajez, with the same thing that is rife throughout the Legion—the conceit and the clique spirit of the men. In my opinion as a private and sergeant, discipline had only one interpretation. Now we have *kaids* among the men, leaders that have nothing to do with official hierarchy, just as in the penal camps. These men are making a bid, upon my word, for officers to recognize them as leaders!

"The way court-martials are run, suspended sentences for refusal to obey, prison instead of death for desertion before the enemy, condemned men claiming protection from their governments for crimes against discipline in the Legion, it is no wonder that an officer's authority is weakened. Our young officers are imbued with the idea that the men must be catered to. We have an example of it right here."

"Yes?"

"A big Russian—a corporal—Hartmann, has somehow wheedled his way into popularity and, despite the fact that his record shows three reductions to the ranks for drinking, puts himself on a footing of equality with me. He is brave, I grant that. But since when has courage been so remarkable in the Legion? A sign of the times, Martier, the blighting decadence which is rotting everything. Proof? The changing of the motto on our flags from 'Valor and Discipline' to 'Honor and Fidelity'. We were not mincing gentlemen in the past, yet we won battles. And does not the word 'discipline' contain both honor and fidelity—from a military point of view, which is all that we care about? Regardless of what happens elsewhere, Martier, I mean that El-Hajez shall be old fashioned. Discipline first. I count on you to strengthen it."

"At your orders, Captain," the lieutenant agreed.

He thought that Dubroc spoke logically enough, upholding the creed found in more than one old-timer in the Legion. The influx of new recruits, swamping the steeled ranks remaining after the war, had somewhat lessened the outward discipline of the corps.

"I arrived at El-Hajez five months back," Dubroc went on. "And I found the post in charge of a lieutenant of twenty-five, without experience, seconded by Gerval. On the strength of a few successful night ambushes Corporal Hartmann loomed as a privileged character, avoiding all fatigue parties, ducking anything that looked like work. He rested between raids as a professional boxer, loafed under pretext that he was doing more than others. Within limits that was permissible. But when it came to giving his allotted tasks as an ordinary corporal to others of the same rank without consulting the commander, I drew the line."

"Evidently," Martier approved.

He saw another angle to the quarrel dividing the commander and his men, one of those dim underground feuds that detract from general efficiency. Seldom admitted, not often revealed to outsiders, they were nevertheless growing more frequent of late.

"That gave a bad example to others. Any time, one might expect to see a corporal claim himself a specialist in cleaning rifles and refuse to do anything else—refuse, as Corporal Hartmann once tried to refuse to drill and march with the rest in an ensemble maneuver. I do not wish to have him court-martialed. There is something good in the man. But I must have unquestioning obedience. I shall have it.

"Today it was his turn to superintend the cleaning. I saw him, as I left my room, playing about, coaching grenadiers. That is in direct contradiction with the orders I gave him personally. I don't want to wreck the fellow if I can help it. No use counting on Gerval, who has some liking for the man—reasonably, I admit—and I can not take official cognizance of this last disobedience without taking severe measures. You have the situation clearly in mind? I have talked long enough to accomplish that, at least."

"I understand."

"All right. I place you in charge of the post this afternoon. You have looked into the records and you have seen that Corporal Hartmann is detailed to the yard police. Have that settled and report to me."

MARTIER left the office with confused thoughts.

His first impression that Captain Dubroc was a little off balance had passed. The commander had quite cleverly forced his hand early in the game, given him reasonable, logical orders, against which no one could complain. Yet, from his first day at the post, Martier would seem to side with the captain wholly, without question. A brilliant move on Dubroc's part, despite the flutter of the big hand to the decorations and the rather erratic exposition of his disciplinary dogma.

He met Gerval a short distance in the yard.

"Well?" the sub-lieutenant asked.

"I'm in charge for the afternoon."

"Did he say anything to you about Hartmann?"

"Plenty. Leaves me no choice."

"Try—" Gerval hesitated, then went on, "After all, I've got in between the bark and the tree often enough. Hartmann is too stubborn."

Martier went on, reached a group of men in whites who were wielding brooms and rolling barrows. A short, mustached man, with green braid across his coat, saluted.

"Are you in charge here?"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"What's your name?"

"Bradnik."

"You are not down for this job today on the order book."

"No, Lieutenant. Corporal Hartmann was supposed to—"

"And who gave you the order to replace him?"

"He asked—"

"You received no orders?"

"No, Lieutenant."

"Where's Corporal Hartmann?"

"Behind Shed 2, Lieutenant."

Martier circled the whitewashed bulk of the supply shed and saw a dozen men, coatless, happy, sweating, casting dead grenades into a circle traced in the dirt. He said nothing for a few moments, but stood watching.

"Not that way! You'd blow your hand off," Hartmann said.

He too had discarded his coat, rolled up his sleeves. His forearms showed, brown on top, creamy white beneath, rippling with muscles. He took his grenade, retreated a good twenty meters farther from the circle than the others had stood. Then he bent, seeming to make a spring out of his big body, and released the shell with the force of a sling.

The hard lump of cast iron thudded in the exact center of the circle and a murmur of prideful applause rose from the privates. Hartmann straightened up and smiled. Yet, he stood still, according to regulations, when Martier stepped toward him.

"Corporal Hartmann?"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"It is your turn to police the yard. I don't want explanations as to why you are here—but I wish you to attend to your duty."

"I spoke to Lieutenant Gerval in your presence—"

"I did not hear him give you permission to absent yourself."

"Yet—"

"My order has been given a full half minute—"

For an instant Martier's glance clashed with Hartmann's. Much as he disliked this show of authority as an introduction to men he must later lead into danger, he could not give in. Stripes do not take into consideration equality of education, or equality, or superiority of social background.

"All right, Lieutenant," Hartmann conceded, with a hint of loftiness. "I obey."

He picked up his coat leisurely.

"At the double," Martier said bruskly.

CHAPTER II

HARTMANN

IN THE detachments of Legion occupying outposts in Morocco, participation in counter-ambush work is voluntary because of the danger involved. The European enters the field of the native instead of coaxing the native into his own.

When Martier consulted the records of El-Hajez, he found reason to admire Corporal Hartmann for his many exploits accomplished in the night, without possibility of help in the event of failure. Coping with tribesmen who, from father to son for as many centuries as history counts, had occupied the region and who were fitted for night skirmishes and knife play, the groups led by Hartmann had emerged winners.

"In spite of all," Martier told Captain Dubroc one afternoon after lunch, "that Hartmann is some one!"

"*Un rude lapin!* Quite a fellow!" Dubroc assented. "I am the first to admit that. But night ambush is not the principal object of the Legion. We are, in the colonies, a civilizing influence even more than a tool of conquest. And there is no civilization outside discipline. That independence of character bred by isolated raids is exactly what must be done away with."

"Nevertheless, Captain, Tower 1 again reports sniping."

"Certainly. No group has gone out at night for a week."

"Something must be done. The little nucleus of experienced men which has gathered around Hartmann is lying down on the job now that the corporal has announced that he will not go out again."

"Thunder!" Dubroc exploded. "That's just why I reproach the man. He believes himself necessary as an individual. Self-confidence must be encouraged; conceit never. However, see what you can do."

Martier called Hartmann, not to the office but into his own quarters. Gerval was present.

Hartmann, with a faint smile of appreciation, noted the new colored rugs on the floor, the framed photographs, army and civilian souvenirs hung on the walls. When he saw that his superior struck a keynote of friendliness, he removed his cap and sat down perfectly at ease. He accepted a cigaret.

"You believe that Gerval has your best interest at heart, Hartmann, even if you don't consider that I have?"

"Yes, Lieutenant."

"*Eh bien!* He'll tell you that I am viewing this lamentable situation here fairly. You are a former officer yourself—do not deny, it is evident—and are in a position to understand our plight. No one forced you to reenlist in the Legion. A simple thing when you refuse to obey as swiftly as we have a right to expect, to send you down to Meknes for trial and have you placed in the Disciplinary Company. Yet, we are Legionnaires also, and try to see your side. Even Captain Dubroc knows and esteems your real worth."

"I am flattered, Lieutenant."

"You are a man of education whom no one of the three of us wish to break. That is why I called you here where it is possible to speak—like men."

"Which means," Hartmann replied quietly, "that you fear the well trained group will not volunteer, that the next group will go out at night without me and be cut to pieces."

"Perhaps," Martier said frankly. "Rightly enough, you have attained prestige here. Yet, in spite of that, you can not, must not, act like an officer superior in rank to all present."

"Why am I not an officer?" Hartmann questioned placidly.

"You know very well," Gerval broke in.

"Drink, yes. But have I ever been seen drunk when I was needed sober? But to get back to the point, here is my position. I risk my hide repeatedly. I do not care for stripes which can not be given in propcrtion to my genuine ability.

Exceptions should be made in my favor. I am not an ordinary man."

"You mean that unless you receive those exceptions you will not volunteer for the next patrol?"

"Decidedly not. Permit Captain Dubroc, who has the bravery of a bull with the craftiness of mind, the intimate knowledge of tactics and strategy peculiar to that animal—permit him to take charge. I respect his type of courage. Let him respect mine."

Martier shrugged. The concessions made to Hartmann's pride had gone the limit. It is not rare in the Legion for an officer to treat a private or a corporal as an individual in the privacy of a room.

But in this instance the beneficiary of the kindness had chosen to speak disrespectfully of a superior. Martier could see that even Gerval, on edge from months of peacemaking, had lost patience.

"This is your last word?"

"First and last, Lieutenant."

"You may go, then."

Hartmann rose, moved to the door, opened it. He replaced his *képi* on his head and saluted. The defiance and the sullen glance added to the magnificence of his dignity.

"Lieutenant—" he saluted Martier; "Lieutenant—" he saluted Gerval. "Good day."

"Hopeless," Gerval said when he had vanished.

"Yet the group must go out and go out voluntarily." Martier lighted a cigaret. "Have you the list of volunteers who are called upon for night work?"

"Naturally, Martier."

"And you have the sketch maps of the localities around here."

"Captain Dubroc has them."

Martier sought Dubroc in his rooms.

"A counter-ambush must be made, Captain," he said.

"Undoubtedly. We can not always stand back from what must come sometime. Yet—it would be annoying to call and have no volunteers. Corporal Hartmann will not and unfortunately none of the sergeants are trusted by the men for that particular job. You know our men, their qualities and their faults— A call for volunteers must be made tomorrow afternoon."

"Who'll lead?"

"I will, Captain."

"You?" Dubroc looked at Martier earnestly. "You are aware it needs a special craftiness. Then, if you fail, Hartmann will prove his point. This is the most bizarre, idiotic plight I have ever found myself in. I'm not right without being wrong." The captain rested his hands on the table, looked at them curiously a long time. "When have you ever been on night raids? I don't mean section maneuvers, with rifles firing, but that slinking, cutthroat business."

"Five times in the Middle Atlas. Against the Berbers of the south. In the Riff, also. In any case, it's not ability that counts just now, but confidence from the men. Ask for volunteers, Captain."

Dubroc called that afternoon.

"The men who wish to volunteer for special duty," Gunther proclaimed from section to section, "will report to the office and give their names."

The office was not approached.

MARTIER found the men who usually followed Hartmann—men who made a point of pride to volunteer again and again for the distinction it brought—gathered behind the sheds conversing in German. On the way he had seen Corporal Hartmann, arms crossed on his chest, sitting outside the cook's shack, appearing disinterested in the whole procedure.

They were a mixed lot.

Karl Werkmann, a German, almost as tall as Hartmann and wider of shoulder. Koloff, Russian, slight, freckled. Lauzier, former sergeant-major in the Belgian army, who had had some difficulty matching his accounts with those of an inspector and had brought his muscular frame and rankling heart to the Legion as one enters a monastery. The rest were the usual blend of Cossack, Polack, Prussian.

"No volunteers?" Martier asked.

Lauzier faltered, licked his lips.

"What's the matter, Lauzier? Afraid?

"We don't know who's to lead, Lieutenant. We sort of were used to Corporal Hartmann—and he isn't going. A man doesn't get such a good chance to come back—at best. We like to feel the leader knows his job. Here, the man who knows it is Hartmann."

"I am to lead, Lauzier."

"Uh—uh—" Lauzier was uncertain.

"I have a pretty good plan," Martier went on. "I'm not as experienced as some others, but I'm going over the ground around here this afternoon and I have maps of the sector. You see I'm in a bad position. I told the captain I'd take charge and yet I can not go alone."

He waited for this to sink in.

"If I have to put this off for a couple of days, telephone Kenefra to send me some men, volunteers from other posts, from the base company itself perhaps—it's too bad, but it will get all over the Legion. And they don't know about Corporal Hartmann everywhere. It would just look as if we had to call some real Legionnaires to do the job."

"We're real Legionnaires," Werkmann said.

"Since when is Hartmann colonel? He seems to decide what's to be done around here. Oh—I'm not afraid to speak about it. You know I know it; I know you know it. We're helping him to make the captain look foolish." He looked at his watch. "Getting late. I'll call up Kenefra, upon a soldier's word, at four o'clock. After that it will be too late."

Martier left them, knowing that in attacking their reputation for courage he had touched the one sensitive string in a Legionnaire's make-up. The tale would spread—to Tonkin, Syria, throughout Morocco. The hospitals would be rife with the rumor. The rest villas in Rabat, Casablanca, Oran, where men from various units came in contact, would serve as a distributing bureau:

"You were at El-Hajez? At the time they had to send to the base for volunteers?"

He had not gone fifty yards when Lauzier caught up with him.

"I'm volunteer, Lieutenant, if the two of us go alone."

A moment later eight men had announced their readiness.

Martier led them into a room used as an amusement hall and brought papers from his pocket.

"Here we have Watch Tower 1. These spots show the usual emplacements of the snipers. These the spots where you laid your ambushes. The best sites have already been used, some twice over, by Hartmann. I know the region too little to spring the trap where they expect us.

"Therefore, the hillock is out of the question. The path down below will be well scouted. So I shall leave them alone during the night—let them fire their shots, cut the wires, tear up the poles and give them the feeling that once again they have a free field. We shall leave here, circle far, and gather here—" Martier indicated on the map. "This is a dried river bed. Passing through the other day, I noted traces of fire under the rocks and tried to understand what they were for. Simple. After their attacks, the mountaineers, never more than twenty, meet there for food, needing it before starting the long trip to their *kasbahs* farther back in their territories. Understood?"

"Yes, Lieutenant." Lauzier knew German and translated for two of the men who did not understand French. "That's a new one! We've ambushed them before attack, during attack—but never after attack."

"The usual equipment will be worn. Six grenades per man, hung at the belt. Automatic pistol and knife. Just before sundown, the Mokhazenis will ride down the slope, which will attract observers. Then we shall go out one by one, rigged in turbans, and meet—here." Again Martier indicated the map. "Mokhazeni Achmet ben Zaid will pilot us to the river bed. Once in place, down flat, and not a movement until I heave my first grenade."

"We'll be far in rebel territory, though,

Lieutenant," Werkmann objected. "Maybe the shots will put all the villages on the alert and we'll be attacked on the way back."

"A section, under Sub-Lieutenant Gerval, will move down from the post at the first sound of firing, upon which we can fall back. Our attack will probably take place shortly before daylight, and when the sun has risen, we shall be safe—that is, forty-eight strong, with three automatic rifles in play. Do you think the hill tribes near here can gather enough men in a short time to chew that lot up before we can cover eight miles? Especially when an hour's fast walking will bring us within the operating zone of reenforcement sections from the post and another twenty minutes under the protection of the machine guns?"

MARTIER stripped to shirt, trousers and laced boots. Around his head he wrapped a towel, like a turban. Reaching down into the pit of the little native stove, he smudged his hands with soot. Around his neck he slung a bag with extra cartridges for his automatic pistol. From his belt he hung six F model grenades. These charming love apples of cast iron contained sixty grams of "cheddite" each.

Gerval came in to shake hands.

"Hope this cures Hartmann," he said.

"More important than my coming back, I suppose." The nervousness inseparable from night work in the bush had gripped him.

"No, no," Gerval protested hastily. "But I take it as a matter of course that—"

"Yes, I'm bound to come back. Unless—which is quite possible, news of the raid has leaked out, through some woman hanging around the post. Unless these Chleuhs, who are not damned fools at all, have reserves ready at the very spot where I hope to ambush them. Unless the natives close in so quickly you and your section come down too late. Yes, as a matter of course, I'll come back. Want a bit of advice?"

"Always," Gerval said, whitening.

"Were I you, I wouldn't let a favor done me in the past spoil my judgment. The more educated Hartmann is, the more noble he is, the dirtier his behavior seems. And if I pull out of this with a whole hide you can bet he will march in step." Then Martier laughed. "Of course he's done what I'm about to do twenty times. Multiply my present agitation by twenty and I'd offer a pretty sight!"

Thirty minutes later, having crossed the open space between the walls and the bushes slowly, differing little from an ordinary native to a distant observer, he met Achmet ben Zaid, his guide. Achmet ben Zaid was a little fellow, bearded, unhandsome, rather dirty at first glance. But he had honest, frank eyes, and bore on the front of his blue *burnous* the yellow and green of the Military Medal. Born in the region, a dissident himself two years before, he was the ideal pilot for the patrol. He said nothing, but showed blackened teeth in a confident grin.

One by one the eight volunteers joined them.

Soon after nightfall they were in position by the dried river bed. By the light of the stars, faint and unreal, Martier could guess rather than distinguish the scattered boulders against which he had noticed the smudges of smoke.

But herders might have set fire to the bushes here. There was no evidence, even if the spot had been used by the raiders in the past, that it would be so used this night. Throughout the long wait disturbing thoughts flitted through his head one by one. He had relied on vague information, on hints and upon instinct. In daylight his reasoning derived from those bases had seemed sound.

A growing uneasiness seeped at the base of his skull. He could even locate the exact spot in the hollow immediately between the ears at the nape of his neck. His thoughts had been guessed; news had gone out and he was surrounded by foes who waited his first move to attack—the

suspicion welled to almost certainty at times.

His body had been stretched comfortably, at first, on a smooth surface of crushed grass. Now his aching limbs sensed protruding lumps, sharp stones, with increasing, acute perceptions. The soil within the spread of his arms, a semicircle less than six feet in diameter, was familiar to his groping fingers. Time after time his outstretched hand, moving softly, rested against the stone which was smooth as agate on one side, rasping as a file on the other. There were three pebbles snugly together, touching one another, which he had counted over and over again. By bringing up his left knee a fraction of an inch, the bone came in contact with a hard surface, a boulder sunk deep into the ground, unnoticed when he selected the spot.

From the present, his mind slid forward into the future, backward into the past. The cool of the night air, the smell of grass, the stars, reminded him of an excursion he had taken when a very small boy. The carriage had broken down, and they, his father and mother and himself, had spent the night on blankets. Looking up, Martier could see the dim, black outline of the tree branches over him, resembling, like brethren, those of the apple tree which had sheltered them.

Another night under the stars—his first attack night at the Front. A shell hole crowded with ill smelling men, his comrades, and ill smelling corpses, useless débris of a Prussian regiment which had clung to the ground doggedly during a day of fighting. There had been no branches above him, but in the intervals between rockets, he had distinguished the corpse of a tree, standing upright, defiantly, shorn of all branches. He had been annoyed that night because a comrade, wounded in the abdomen, had moaned, refusing to die. In the catastrophe of sound, the crash of the field artillery, the pounding of the railroad pieces far in the rear of the lines, that tenuous, infinitely small sound, like a puppy's whimper, had cut deep into his soul.

His first ambush night in Morocco—in the desert, somewhere east of Erfou, which is near Bou-Denib—near Bou-Denib as the crow flies, but many weary hours march as Legionnaires travel. The night was cold, too. And the sand felt like crumbled gravestones. No tree, but a telegraph pole looming high against the starry spread, the single wire barely visible.

A night in the Riff, with his company on the position where darkness had caught it. The air was cool and a bush had stretched its twigs, each one clean cut, half a meter from his eyes. That night, far back, a man had been singing, in German, a lonely, mournful chant, which Martier had heard coming across the shell pits from hostile trenches, seven short years before.

Five feet away now was Achmet ben Zaid, who had been an enemy also two short years before. The men they were waiting for, to kill, would doubtless be his allies two years from tonight. It was a queer thing, that shifting of allegiance, which makes a German follow the tricolor and changes a Chleuh into a Mokhazeni.

By reckoning it was nearly five o'clock; therefore they had been stretched, motionless, for nearly ten hours. In that time, even to Martier who knew they were there, not a sound, not a cough, not a rustle. They lay quiet, with the condensed death in the hand grenades forming hard lumps of iron against their flanks.

Good men, the finest soldiers under the sun. . . .

Living history, living geography, men who had seen the shores of all oceans, the banks of most of the rivers of the earth. Men who had lived, men who had consequently sinned, but men who could die. To command them was a privilege. They brought many qualities and a few faults. Yet even those faults made them what they were. Superb conceit, supreme self-confidence. Unstable as quicksand, loyal

as — he sought for the words — as — Legionnaires.

There were eight of them.

Eight of them—unless? Weird tales cropped up from long closed cells of memory, of men slain a yard from comrades, without a sound. Death or capture—he knew the fate of those taken alive. Stomachs slit open, bowels taken out, the vacant space filled with stones, the lips of the cut sewed together again. To end with, beheading. A horrible vision arose, a sight he could never forget—the body of an aviator, crucified against the door of a *kasbah*, staring from empty eyes at the column of troops ascending the slope.

WITH an effort Martier stilled those thoughts. Again his eyes alone lived and he stared toward the river bed. Had he been mistaken? It would be humiliating to lead the group back without fighting. More humiliating than a defeat, for one might have reasoned rightly to have been defeated, while returning without sighting the enemy was proof of error in judgment.

The sky seemed to lighten as if the light were fusing into it from the endless space beyond. Martier started. Shots; four, five, a dozen. In the direction of the watch tower. Then the sharper cracks of the Lebels. Whatever had been attempted back there was over, the natives were scattering to reassemble somewhere. Here?

Cutting across the bush, the watch tower was less than three miles away. The natives move quickly, run like wild animals after striking their blows. Within a very brief time Martier would know whether his supposition had been correct.

"It's growing lighter," he thought.

He had turned his head slightly and where there had been a thick, velvety darkness, he could easily discern the outline of a man, the native guide. It was more as if his glance were sensitized and prolonged his physical sensations rather than that he actually saw.

A faint rustling, the scraping of cloth against thorns—one of his men had moved, perhaps. No, for the sound was repeated, carelessly, loudly, and a man could be heard clearing his throat, spitting. From the river bed. No possibility of error this time. The man was approaching confidently, could not have come from anywhere save the vicinity of the watch tower without passing the Legionnaires first.

Martier had the definite sensation that his men were tensing, that they were ready. A new fear welled up. Would some hasty fool precipitate an alarm before more natives arrived? Down below, thirty yards away, the first newcomer was moving about, gathering wood. The spot was not badly chosen for a hidden camp. The smoke straggled beneath the overhanging rock and was dispelled as it emerged from the gully by the morning wind. He heard the scratching of a match—the mountaineers accepted some gifts from civilization—and a ruddy light struck the dry, clay soil of the farther bank.

"*Mâ andhou bass*," said a voice. "There is no trouble."

Some one else answered, then two or three men picked up the conversation. They had arrived soundlessly, joined the ones about the fire. Martier could not see them but their silhouettes were outlined by the flames against the bank, elongated by the rifle barrels, the heads round, wrinkled by the narrow band swathing the foreheads.

"I'll wait a few minutes longer," Martier decided.

The Chleuhs were perfectly at ease, secure in this spot, remote from the French post, a spot which had given them safe shelter before. They were, like most North Africans when among their kind, garrulous and noisy. Doubtless they had left one or two guards on the trail to warn them of approaching danger from the direction of El-Hajez.

The light grew swiftly, and now Martier could distinguish the features of his guide. A few yards farther he discerned the back of one of his men. They would

not be sorry they had come. Something to remember, something to boast about.

Martier took a grenade from his belt, twisted the ring and rose to his knees. Then, in one movement, he was on his feet, left arm leveled toward his target, right hand low. The cast iron shell sped through the air. The crash of the explosion was indistinguishable from the burst following. On all sides the Legionnaires had risen and heaved grenades into the gully.

"Forward!"

He ran, pistol in hand, and fired three shots into the body of a native scrambling to the level ground. The next moment he was near the rocks, seeking targets. But it was useless—the grenades had done the work, while the two or three survivors had been picked off by the men.

Martier directed the search for the weapons, counted the bodies. There were twelve. In his opinion, shared by all the men, the entire raiding party had been wiped out. Martier's stroke had been a master stroke.

The lieutenant extracted the magazine from his pistol, reloaded it. He had three grenades left and most of his men had used only two. Meanwhile the men were stretching their limbs, stiffened by the immobility and cold of the night. The hours of waiting now seemed unreal.

"Eh, a bugle—" said Werkmann.

"Lieutenant Gerval's section come down in support. We'd better leave," Martier concluded.

They could return later with shovels to bury the dead. Just now it might prove dangerous to remain.

The little party trotted along the path, steadily upward, to meet the section. Before long the khaki coats and white cap covers emerged from the bushes.

MARTIER had undressed and slipped beneath the blankets of his narrow cot. He stretched his limbs luxuriously, smiled vaguely at the ceiling. More than twenty kilometers in his legs, a sleepless night, then a hearty meal; his sleep should be sound.

A knock upon the door.

"Come in," he invited jovially.

Instead of Gerval or Dubroc, Hartmann entered. He walked toward the cot ceremoniously, removed his cap and bowed. He straightened with intense dignity of bearing.

"I came to congratulate you, Lieutenant."

"Thanks, old man, thanks."

"You have beaten me. Such is the ingratitude of men—"

"All right, old man; I want to sleep."

"You misunderstand. I am not here as a Legionnaire, nor even as a corporal, but as a gentleman admitting defeat." Hartmann bowed again. "Only, there must be a play-off."

"Agreed, agreed," Martier assured him, drawing up the top blanket meaningly. "I appreciate your sporting spirit as a gentleman. This afternoon, around three-thirty, we shall resume this interesting conversation. Just now I can not do justice to myself."

"You would not be sleepy, Lieutenant Martier, could you read in my heart."

Martier threw back the blankets, swung to a sitting position on the cot. He had observed Hartmann's eyes, dilated, misting pupils, the droop of the lower lips and the quivering of the massive chin.

"Hartmann, you are drunk."

"I am drunk—the body is drunk. The soul is stark sober."

"Take your body to bed," Martier suggested gently. "Sleep it off. Sleep, Corporal Hartmann, is a great healer."

"Out of all I was I had preserved nothing but my poor pride," Hartmann moaned. "You robbed me of it, monsieur, you robbed me."

Martier got out of bed, opened the door.

"I'm not keeping you, Hartmann."

"You are ordering me out?"

"Exactly."

Hartmann quivered, seemed about to burst into tears, shook his head. Mar-

tier was in no mood to stand for a long, drunken, sentimental conversation. He repeated his order three times. Each time Hartmann mumbled his reasons, as a gentleman, and did not leave. Finally Martier called his orderly, who argued with the corporal, pulled him by the sleeve. But as the private weighed about one hundred and thirty pounds and Hartmann passed two hundred, he met with little success.

Captain Dubroc appeared, attracted by the uproar.

"What's going on here?" He noted Hartmann's condition and spoke kindly. "Come on, Corporal Hartmann. I hear you are a former officer. You certainly can not brawl when inebriated."

"I'm not addressing you, old scabbard!"

"The old scabbard will give you eight days in the chink," Dubroc warned without excitement in his tone. "I warn you that your stripes will leap off for this if you do not go immediately."

"Yes? Yes?" Hartmann tore the green stripes from his cuffs and threw them violently on the ground, trampled on them. "That's what I think of them. In a company commanded by you, it is a dishonor for a gentleman to be a corporal."

Dubroc was evidently horribly embarrassed by the scene. His face flushed darker every second. But he was a good man at heart, knew of old these peculiar outbursts of Legionnaires, disliked to take official action. But what Hartmann had just done counted many crimes in the code; wilful destruction of government property, insults to the commander, refusal to obey. Before a court-martial Hartmann would get eight days in a penal camp. Doubtless the captain thought this too severe a punishment for a drunken gesture.

"I saw nothing, Hartmann. Leave."

"Leave? You're afraid to punish me?" Hartmann swayed slightly. "Afraid that I shall tell about your senile stupidity?" He flicked his left breast with his hand. "Dubroc, Knight of the Legion of Honor, not even a major."

"You insult the man's infirmity," Dubroc said sadly. "The captain hears nothing you say."

Hartmann thought this remark over, striving visibly to understand. Something of the officer's dignity pierced through his muddled brain and he was contrite instantly.

"I apologize to the man. I apologize to the man."

Dubroc regarded him calmly.

"Your apology is accepted. Go away, Hartmann. Hide yourself from the men and sleep it off."

"I want to be punished! I want to be punished!" Hartmann yelled.

Dubroc looked toward Martier helplessly and shrugged.

"Eight days in prison."

"Thank you, man," Hartmann accepted. But he had a bottle of alcohol in his stomach and evidently enjoyed his new humility more than defiance. "I must be placed under guard. An escort to go to prison—"

"Corporal Hartmann, take prisoner Hartmann to the lockup," Dubroc ordered seriously.

A great light seemed to break upon Hartmann. He picked up his stripes, straightened, saluted.

"Yes, Captain."

He spun on one heel, marched to the door and out, followed by the orderly, who was bursting with ill controlled laughter and would have a great story to tell his comrades.

"Strange," Dubroc mused aloud, seemingly rooted in one spot, "how little it takes to shift a drunken man. But he is dangerous. I do not trust those exalted fellows." He reached up mechanically, became aware of the gesture and turned from red to white. "He's right, Martier. I am a bit soft headed on the subject."

"Pay no attention."

"No. I have made myself ridiculous in the Legion. I am unfit for it—it must be all over the five regiments. I should transfer—"

He left, his shoulders bowed.

CHAPTER III

ESCAPE

WHETHER of noble origin or not, Hartmann behaved like all men in prey to the legendary disease of the Legion, the "cockroach". The mythical insect seemed to be squirming inside his brain, feet upward.

When he awoke from his drunk he tore his clothing to shreds, minutely, tossed the buttons out between the bars of his cell. When his food was brought to him he appeared before the astounded orderly absolutely nude. He kicked the full tin pan from the man's hands and struck him over the head with a fragment of plank torn from the inclined boards used as a bed.

His roaring was heard from all corners of the post. His phrases were chiefly uncomplimentary to Martier, although Captain Dubroc was spattered with his share of epithets. Gerval obtained a measure of calmness from him. Upon a promise of peace he was given food, clothing, new blankets. Dubroc, under Gerval's pleas, once more gave way and placed no official charge.

However, with the exception of Hartmann, the men in the post were satisfied. The tension had abated. The feud dividing officers from men, never openly admitted, was ended. The Chleuhs, after the gruesome execution at the creek, were stunned, the watch tower left alone. Five or six wood gathering parties had gone out and returned without being fired upon.

On the sixth day of his imprisonment Hartmann committed the unpardonable sin. He struck a superior. Sergeant Gunther, who had been his friend and believed himself privileged to speak as such, had entered his cell to scold him for smearing the walls of it with filth, a trick designed doubtless to annoy his jailers.

Hartmann struck him on the mouth, loosening his teeth, cutting his lips. Gunther was willing to drop the matter, but this time Dubroc decided to end the scandal. He declared that charges would be made against Hartmann and that the corporal would go down to be tried in Meknes. Gunther was very well noted. Hartmann had a record as heavily loaded with punishments as with citations. Due to his good conduct in the field, he would probably receive no more than three years in the prison camp.

Suddenly enlightened as to the worth of their former idol, the men had nothing but scorn for him. They gave back to Dubroc the admiration and love he was accustomed to from his Legionnaires and it was touching to see the veteran captain dilate under this renewed confidence.

Upon learning that his report had been sent down to Meknes for examination, that he would be undoubtedly tried, Hartmann sobered down completely. Even the sight of Martier, which had sent him into spasms of rage, failed to stir him to harsh words. On the day when his prison term expired, he even called for the lieutenant, who came, it must be admitted, prepared for the worst.

"What do you wish of me, Hartmann?"

"A favor, Lieutenant. I know I don't deserve it, but I trust that you will grant it."

"What is it?"

"I'm going down to face court-martial at Meknes. I know they'll salt me good down there. I'd like to have a little freedom here, until I go. I promise not to misbehave in this post again, until I have gone."

"You promise?"

"On my word of honor—" Hartmann smiled, corrected himself— "on my word as a Legionnaire."

"*Parole de légionnaire!*"

Martier knew the value of those three words. To his knowledge, no one, not even the worst men in the unit, had ever been false to such an oath. He understood perfectly well what Hartmann desired. Knowing he would be a prisoner several years, he wished to spend his last days in comparative freedom, free to talk, free to write, free to read.

"If you had behaved this way a few days ago," he pointed out, "you wouldn't

be where you are. But the report has gone down and there's no way to stop it."

"I know there isn't, Lieutenant. But my request?"

"Granted as far as I am concerned. "I'll speak to the captain."

"Gave you his word as a Legionnaire?" Dubroc asked when Martier told him of the interview. "Then give him the freedom of the yard. Poor devil—he'll have time to atone later."

Thus Hartmann was released on parole and spent long hours in the canteen, imbibing a little, listening much, seeming to revel in the sense of freedom which would be so short lived. Several times Martier saw him enter Gerval's room, and the sub-lieutenant told him he was helping him straighten out some business affairs which he wished settled before his condemnation.

THE MONOTONY, common to all outposts, fell down like a cloak.

It was a monotony which Martier enjoyed. His leaves in France invariably left him with a deep satisfaction that he was engaged in something worthwhile, that, in the agitated mass chasing of commercial success and striving to wring the utmost dose of pleasure out of life, he offered himself the luxury of risking his hide for an ideal. With astonishing swiftness, post-war France had snapped back to its pettiness, to its political squabbles, forgetting the passionate heroism that had flamed up for the grim period of the struggle.

"It amuses you to kill Moroccans?" a young lady had asked him once.

Amusement—Martier had resented the word. If it had not "amused" certain Frenchman to kill certain natives, the Third Republic would now lack considerable property. Many had varied the amusement by getting killed themselves. The list was long. Frenchmen forgotten by France, whose work still lived and brought wealth to the land.

Mahogany came down the river in which Captain Ménard had drowned. Cotton was beginning to give returns where de Chevigné and Belleville had dropped. Settlers, merchants, traders were reaping harvest grown by the blood of Moll and others near the Chad. Martier in turn humbly shared the bitter joy of working for ingrates.

Strange lives, those of the colonial soldiers, made of suffering, renunciation and oblivion. On the day when Carpentier had centered the good wishes of France upon himself, in a deathless struggle with four-ounce gloves, Martier had marched beside a mule—which bore the aching bulk of a comrade, wounded through the bowels. The man had died, an unsung knockout.

One afternoon he had worked until late, adjusting the Hotchkiss machine guns on Bastion 2. The gunsmith and he had been on edge, for there are few things so capricious as automatic weapons. He ate a hasty dinner, read awhile and turned in.

The white glare of a rocket against the white walls awoke him. Outside, men were running, shouting; questions were crossing uncompleted answers.

"Who is it? Why don't you fire? Where is the officer of the day?"

Gerval was on duty, presumably. Martier did not move; it was not likely to be an attack. Long since the mountaineers had learned that an attack on El-Hajez was most unwise. The distance was calculated for the machine guns so that even in the darkness assailants would suffer heavy losses.

The report of a rifle shattered the night, succeeded instantly other reports. This time Martier rose, slipped into his great coat and went out, pistol in hand. Another rocket went up and the yard was flooded with the raw, intense whiteness of its light. Gunther, the sergeant, was outside, with a half dozen half dressed privates.

"May have fallen in the wires—"

"Who? What's wrong?"

"Some one ran out—slid down the wall on a rope—"

"A native?"

"No. Looked like a Legionnaire," Gunther said.

"How do you know?" another sergeant put in.

"I tell you he had a *képi*. I saw him going over the edge. The sentry had his back turned."

"Deserter," Martier said.

"Unless he went out for a walk, Lieutenant." Gunther laughed.

"The natives'll cut his head," the other sergeant said.

"Unless he took some guns as a present," Martier declared.

Martier crossed the yard swiftly and met Gerval.

"Better get the men out and call the roll," Martier suggested. "We'll find out who it is."

"No need. The sentry who fired recognized him. It's Hartmann—"

"The slob! He had promised."

"What can I do about it?" Gerval snapped. "I gave the order to fire as soon as I got on the spot. But he had crossed the barbed wire and was going down the slope. Wasn't hit—I saw him go into the bushes."

"He's a pretty lad, that one," Martier grumbled.

He turned to Gunther:

"You're right, Sergeant. He probably took some guns. Check off, will you?"

Captain Dubroc emerged—in slippers, but with his tunic fastened. For several minutes the three officers discussed the affair, coming to the unusually brilliant conclusion that it was a dirty trick on the part of Hartmann, who was out on parole. Sergeant Gunther arrived to report that the corporal had taken with him three carbines, picked from the machine gunners' rack. Yes, the machine gunners had heard something, but Hartmann had identified himself and they had not thought anything wrong. Further search showed that several bands of machine gun ammunition were missing also. Hartmann had succeeded in thieving these easily enough, knowing as he did the habits of the owners. Nevertheless, a trio of men would have a bad time explaining the loss of their weapons.

"He's heavily loaded with all that stuff," Martier suggested. "We might try to overhaul him before he joins the natives."

"No—" Dubroc shrugged. "What's the use? You couldn't find him in the dark and might run into some prowling bunch of Chleuhs."

He turned to Gerval.

"Where were you when he escaped?"

"In the office, Captain."

"True, you couldn't guess. Three carbines, a few hundred cartridges. Won't they raise hell down below? Why wasn't he fired upon sooner?"

"The sentry did not see him get over the wall. Then, first thing he knew, he heard some one moving in the wires. He called out and the man answered in French. So he called the corporal on duty, who had a rocket sent up to see what it was all about. By that time he had crawled under the strands and was pulling his stuff after him. I arrived a few seconds later and ordered the sentry to fire—"

"Didn't think of using that?" He indicated the revolver.

"Captain—" Gerval was very pale, but firm— "I did. Yet I could not bring myself to—"

"Understandable, perhaps," Dubroc concluded.

The captain smoked a cigar, cursed a little, then turned in.

Martier thought this a wise move and followed suit. But Gerval entered not five minutes later.

"This is what he left for me," he said nervously.

Martier took the sheet of paper and read the firm, big writing.

> My friend:
>
> Unwilling to stand injustice, I leave. You alone have known enough to appreciate me at my worth, thank you. For your consolation, know I did not break my word as a Legionnaire. I promised Martier that I would behave until my departure. I did. I include the seizure of weapons and ammunition in my departure, naturally, because they were necessary to my

safety among the natives. I ask you to mail the letters I prepared, please, friend.

—HARTMANN

"Seizure of weapons," Martier commented. "He has such words to explain his theft!"

"Unlucky man," Gerval said.

"Burnt brain, crazy. He thinks the natives will let him go? They'll use him as long as they can, then, when they make peace with us, turn him over. What are you going to do with his letters?"

"I?" Gerval hesitated. "Turn them over to the authorities, I suppose."

"You're getting some sense," Martier replied.

Hartmann was heard from sooner than expected, and that literally. Six hundred meters down the slope there was a protuberance of soil on which grew thick bushes and a few trees. Soon after nightfall the following day the sentries reported some one calling from there. The speaker knew the names of those within and invited them to desert.

The officers went to the wall to listen.

"Eh, Werkmann! Eh, Lauzier!"

"Answer him," Dubroc permitted.

"Here, Lauzier! Is that you, Hartmann?"

"Yes! Tell the old fool to go to hell for me, will you?" There followed a string of choice words describing Martier's private habits in scorching details, fortunately imaginary. "I see him, the coward! Tell him to come out and fight me, man to man. Say, they've given me a tent and two women. There's plenty money here, silver—they'll pay you."

"Some one has a knife in his back to make him say that," Dubroc stated loyally. "That's a lie."

"Eh! Dubroc, I'm talking to you—Knight of the Legion of Honor and Emperor of the Cuckolds! Greetings, old fool!"

Around the officers, the privates laughed in spite of themselves. The rough wit of Hartmann, not so long ago stiffened before the captain by discipline, spoke of unlimited freedom.

"Why doesn't that illegitimate son of abnormal habits come out?" Hartmann went on. "I mean you, Martier! It would be a little harder to catch me than to lick boots, wouldn't it?"

Martier knew that this did not add to his dignity. He could not retort, yet his anger rose. Dubroc glanced toward him and shook his head pityingly.

"Poor fellow—"

"Eh! Anybody want to duck out here? There's ways of getting out with a stake, too. Plenty of women, all the booze you want. I swear it, and you know me! They've got the stuff taken from the wrecked trucks of last month's convoy—cognac, beer, wine, anything you want! And the janes aren't as bad as those of the B.M.C!"

Hartmann was still clamoring his taunts and his promises when the three officers went down to dinner. They had no sooner left than the sentries fired toward the grove, on the chance they might hit. Dubroc sent word to stop wasting ammunition.

"I'll go out and wait for him some day," Martier grumbled.

"I order you not to," Dubroc protested. "Can't you see that's what he wants? Are you young enough to be coaxed like that? Haven't you ever heard a deserter before?"

The following day Martier went out with the Mokhazenis and located the tracks of Hartmann's boots. Returned to the post, he trained the machine guns of the bastions upon the spot.

Hartmann's voice was heard again at dusk.

"Hello, in there! Do I see the old fool? Yes—his decorations gleam like suns! Eh! Dubroc, how much will you take for your kitchen ware? You'll need money to buy your fourth stripe! Eh, Martier, no sign of you out here? Brave man, brave man! Slob, swine, coward, bootlicker!"

"I have the machine guns set, Captain. Shall I try a few rounds?"

"If you wish," Dubroc consented.

The rigid bands of twenty-five cartridges were already inserted. At a slight

gesture from Martier, four machine guns crossed their fire upon the spot where Hartmann's tracks had been found. A brusk silence followed. Several minutes passed.

"You must have riddled him," Gerval said, very pale.

"I hope—" Martier started.

But the voice of the invisible man came, clear, strong, seemingly from the same spot.

"A hundred cartridges wasted. Dissipation of government ammunition, Martier."

"Are we going to get treated to that every evening?" Martier wondered.

"Very likely," Dubroc said philosophically.

Hartmann's taunts continued:

"Eh! Fellows! See how much they can do to me out here. If you are men and not slobs, you'll duck, too. I talked it over with the *kaid* out here and he says the first guy to come can have his pick—two girls! And don't come empty handed. Bring rifles, carbines, cartridges. We'll need them."

THE SAD part of the episode was that a young German, nineteen years old, was tempted. Gone out with a wood gathering party the next day, he watched for his chance and ducked as instructed with fifty cartridges and three rifles. He did not enjoy this freedom long. The Mokhazenis, unleashed on his trail, overhauled him on their skinny horses before he could reach safety in rebel land, and—they said he tried to resist arrest—brought back his body. The bullet had entered the back of his head, and taken away the greater part of his face.

His comrades realized that he had been in the wrong, but they felt that the native riders had not given him a chance to surrender. This caused friction between the Mokhazenis and the Legionnaires, which translated itself into a row. Three men were locked up and a native was evacuated, accompanied by his wives and children, to Kenefra. He had lost an eye and the rest of his face was not beautiful to look upon.

Hartmann's voice that evening was greeted by a general discharge, fired without order, which told much of the general nervousness. Between shots the mocking voice of the ex-corporal rose, alternatingly shrill and booming, cursing, insulting, promising.

Martier laid traps for those who prowled the knot of bushes at dusk, traps made with two hand grenades, connected by a wire strung low on the ground, which wire operated the firing lever. Around five o'clock, after the wood gatherers had returned, explosions announced the success of the trick. A section ran out with fixed bayonets, scoured the knoll and found the mangled bodies of two natives. Hartmann had escaped.

Nevertheless he must have decided that the spot was unsafe for further exploits, and his voice came from a much more remote spot the following day, so far that the words, caught and dispelled by the wind, were unintelligible.

Two days later, in the morning, four rifles were missing. They had vanished mysteriously during the night. No one had deserted. The explanation came in a note handed Captain Dubroc by a native woman who came to the post for medical attention.

Martier read the document without elation.

Dear Old Man:

This is your receipt for four rifles, which you will please send to Meknes with my thanks. You are so well guarded that I entered and left without being noticed. Had I been strong enough I could have marched out with machine guns under my arms. I passed within three meters of your clever lieutenant, and he saw nothing. I believe, upon my salvation, that he was counting the stars. I wished to knife him but my retreat in that case might have been difficult, so I put off that worthy undertaking until another day. But assure him of my special interest in this matter. I shake your hand cordially. I bear you no grudge, and hope that Moulaya, the local god, will send you your fourth stripe soon. Inform my good friend, Gerval, that I am aware that he has turned over my private letters to the authorities, but that I do not blame him over much.

With his upbringing and faulty education, he believes that his loyalty should go to a mythical ideal rather than a proved friend.

Your most devoted former corporal,

—HARTMANN, PAUL, NO. 05165

"Can you figure how he came in?" Dubroc asked.

"In disguise, probably."

"I do not alarm myself usually," the captain resumed, "but, were I you, I'd take that warning seriously."

"I am taking it seriously. May I show this to Gerval?"

"Of course—"

Martier was surprised to find Gerval packing. Several days before he had received the official order from Meknes granting leave of absence. Gerval had said that he wished to stay on until the "Hartmann business" was settled. The pictures were off the walls, the native rugs rolled up and strapped, his baggage piled in a corner.

"So you've decided to leave?"

"Yes—" Gerval seemed about to speak, faltered, was silent.

Martier thought he distinguished traces of tears on his cheeks. The eyes were undeniably reddened. Mourning over Hartmann, probably! For the young man had shown evidence of great perturbation when the name was mentioned, had been jumpy of late, nervous.

Gerval read the letter, handed the paper back without a word. Then he bent and fumbled among his belongings.

"I have to be ready for tomorrow's return convoy, Martier. You'll excuse me if I go on packing?"

DESERTER and renegade instead of Legionnaire, Hartmann was the same man who had turned his back upon snipers to inspire confidence in a chief he happened to like. His character, tending toward evil, was undeniably strong and resolute. And he could enter and leave the post undetected.

Martier did not now believe his first theory that he had come in disguised as a native. Few unknown natives entered the enclosure and, even wrapped in strange garments, Hartmann's height and bulk would have attracted attention. The lieutenant climbed to the defensive wall and paced back and forth, striving to find an angle from which a man passing over the wall would be invisible to the sentries.

Everywhere, a man's head pushed over the edge of the parapet would be instantly noticed. Complicity on the part of a sentry was extremely unlikely. And even if he had an accomplice, the officer's rounds, succeeding one another at very brief intervals, would render the feat most difficult to accomplish.

The triple girdle of barbed wire outside formed a formidable obstacle, but not forbidding altogether. A sort of shallow ditch might be dug underneath, permitting a man to slide under. By throwing mats over the top strands one might crawl across. The noise would be drowned out by the screeching of the mountain wind, by the milling and trampling of the oxen and sheep kept in a corral between the wires and the main gate.

Yes, the wires could be crossed. But the walls?

Martier worked with method. He drew a sketch map of the outpost on a leaf of his notebook. The areas of defensive wall exposed to full view from the inside of the post were out of the question. An opening, no matter how small, would be instantly discovered. There remained the structures backed against the enclosure, forming part of it.

The lieutenant numbered the sides, from one to four, starting with the southern face pierced by the gate. The gateway itself was not to be considered; neither were the bastions. Men armed with V. B. rifle grenades were on duty constantly. On Face 1 were the following buildings: bakery, kitchen and telephone station. All three were occupied constantly during the day, their walls seen by a dozen men.

On Face 2, which was the western side, there were: stables, latrines, armorer's shop and tool shed. Always occu-

pied, always visited. Face 3 showed the ambulance and the long structure occupied by the men. Neither was ever empty. And Face 4 was the least probable, for it comprised one long building, holding: the captain's room, Gerval's room, Martier's room, the mess room, the non-commissioned officer's quarters and the office. At El-Hajez, the two sheds sheltering supplies and ammunitions were detached from the walls, isolated.

Martier went outside the post, examined the walls, saw nothing. He reentered the yard, visited every building, every room, save those occupied by Dubroc and Gerval. And he ended this long inquest with the following conclusion: Hartmann could not possibly pass over the walls, nor through them. Logically, he could not drop from above. A tunnel into one of the sheds, both of which were padlocked and guarded, would be an undertaking beyond imagination.

Nevertheless, Hartmann had entered, left and assured them he could do both again. How? How?

The Russian's actual plight forced him to prove his value to his new friends. The natives of the Middle Atlas follow Mohammed's creed casually enough, and when the adopted religion and their own ancestral customs clash, religion loses out. Nevertheless, their hatred of Christians, that is to say strangers, would-be conquerors, is deep, addressed more to the invader than to the faith he professes.

Many times Martier had heard the pitiful tales of deserters striving to explain to court-martial that they were responsible for the first misdeed alone. They had deserted to get away from discipline, from a chief whom they believed unjust, or just for love of movement and adventure; then they had been forced to carry on acts of hostility and treason toward their former comrades.

The lieutenant could imagine the scene that had unrolled in the native village the morning after Hartmann's desertion. The chief, the *kaid*, had called him:

"Thou hast brought us guns. That is well."

Hartmann smiled with pride and hoped for prompt reward in the shape of assistance to get out of the neighborhood as quickly as possible, to get back to Europe. To the conceited Russian, the dignified old gentleman, with dingy rags wrapped around his brow as a turban, leaving a smooth, shaven skull glinting in the sun, seemed an adversary unfit to cope with in matters of finesse. Then the chief had spoken again:

"That is well indeed. However, we need more guns, cartridges. Food and shelter must be earned. Go back for more guns."

"But those I have already brought?"

"The price of thy life."

And Hartmann, caught in the cogs, would be forced to risk his life every day, share in every attack, every dangerous mission. And as he had seemed in some fashion to have arrived at the conclusion that Martier was to blame for the situation, he would seek to avenge his fancied wrongs.

The signal for dinner, the pounding of a brass shell with a stick, found him still puzzled. How had Hartmann stolen the rifles undetected? And how would he come? For he would come again.

The meal was gloomy.

Dubroc was annoyed by the loss of four rifles, coming so close on the theft of the carbines. The owners would be punished, of course, but the moral responsibility fell on the commander. Regimental headquarters at Meknes would demand explanations that could not be supplied. Although the Legion boasts that it has some of everything in its ranks, from laborer to bishop and prince, doctors, lawyers, artists, musicians, the colonel would refuse to believe that a magician of such skill had been enrolled.

Martier, having no help to offer, sympathized mutely. As for Gerval, he ate in silence, avoiding the lieutenant's glance. He was very pale, nervous and spilled his wine.

"Good thing you're leaving tomorrow," Martier suggested.

"Yes—"

"Let's hope you have a good time."

"Unlikely."

Dubroc changed the conversation by referring to a new military book. Soon Gerval consulted the captain with a glance, then rose and left.

"Something serious is the matter with Gerval," Dubroc said.

"Easily guessed," Martier replied. "He is young and broods over Hartmann. He feels as we do that the man will end before a firing squad."

"Perhaps. He is at a very sensitive age and it's lucky for all concerned that he is leaving now."

Martier went back to his room, read and wrote letters for an hour or so. Then he went out again, under the stars, and inspected the sentries. The blackness outside fascinated him. He felt that Hartmann would allow time to elapse, would not try to repeat his stunt two nights in succession, but nevertheless he paid attention to each sound coming from below. From Bastion 3 between the looming bulks of the sheds, he could see the light in Gerval's room. The sub-lieutenant was still packing, for his shadow flitted before the window constantly.

A lamp was burning in Dubroc's room also, and Martier smiled a little as he imagined the captain bending over his books. Dubroc was fond of stories of adventure unrolling in the American West.

The man at the machine gun was young, comparatively new and talkative. For a long while, clinging to the few remarks offered by Martier as cores for his confidences, he told of his life, of the trouble with his father, of his decision to enter the Legion. He was German and did not speak French very well. His story was a series of banal quarrels, hooked up by prestigious reasonings, filled with nobility and sacrifice, which the Legionnaire credited to himself. Martier was rather bored, but a brusk interruption from a superior he was beginning to like might change his entire future attitude. The lieutenant fulfilled his task as a Legion officer, which holds something of the priest's as well as the soldier's job.

"After five years here you'll be more of a man," he encouraged. "Many times you'll think back and be proud of what you did in the Legion."

"That's right, Lieutenant. And I shall have precious memories. Good men—and bad men—and all sorts of men. The captain who is so fine—and Hartmann, who is so much of a slob." The German paused, stirred uneasily. "Maybe he hears us talking now."

"Hartmann?"

"Yes, Lieutenant. You see, some of the men speak about him—the way he comes in. The way he goes out. They say he was here, four years ago, when the post was being built—that he knows things others forgot. And he certainly came in, Lieutenant."

That, Martier could not deny. He warned the machine gunner against conversing with the sentry on the bastion, took leave and concluded his round. Climbing down the stairs leading to the yard level from the wall near the gate, he rounded the telephone room, looked through the window. The corporal on duty was reading a book by candle light.

In the yard he met Sergeant Gunther, who would be on duty for the next few hours, taking over Gerval's change of guard. They exchanged a few words, on the weather, on the few details concerning the night's routine. Gunther had just questioned the signal man and told Martier that all the outposts depending on El-Hajez had reported, by heliograph, that all was quiet.

"Hartmann's been around Watch Towers No. 1 and 3," he said. "But he just yelled and told the men they were fools. What I'm worried about—he used to say that the natives, if they had any sense, would try to blow up the towers."

"How could they get through the barbed wire?"

"The way they used to in the war. Make a sort of sausage, which you slide beneath the wires against the stone base, with a long stick. Then you light the wick

and the sausage explodes."

"Unless they used dynamite it wouldn't do much harm. The powder they have is nothing for that type of work. Nevertheless, I'll ask the captain to give orders to use rockets without too much economy."

Martier entered his room, undressed leisurely. He was annoyed by the endless references to Hartmann. Even gone, the man held a big rôle among the Legionnaires. By now they realized that he had been crazy; yet they feared him, as much as they could fear anything. Martier grudgingly admitted to himself that he shared their fears. He blew his lantern out and fell asleep.

CHAPTER IV

THE ATTACK

THE CHANGING of sentries awoke him at two o'clock.

He heard the rhythmic tread of the small detachment circling the yard, the rattle of arms, the crisp voices of the non-coms. Martier rose, slipped on boots and greatcoat. Gerval's departure would change turns of duty and nothing had been arranged. But inspections must take place nevertheless.

Outside, the night wind nearly swept him off his feet, whipped at his face with swirls of dust. Scraps of paper floated out of the darkness like fleeting apparitions. It was cold and the lieutenant shuddered. At the barracks, the detachment was turning in again and the noncom who had replaced Gunther entered the office. Martier spoke a few words with him, then walked about aimlessly, smoking. After the first brusk start of the wind, something of its violence suited his mood and it was a relief to struggle against a tangible obstacle.

He was unwilling to go to bed, felt as if fire were pouring in his veins. A great restlessness had come into him, a craving for action, for movement. No hope, he thought, of a column forming before another month, when food would be easier to obtain in hostile territory.

He glanced at his watch and the luminous hands pointed to 3:15. He had been out already more than an hour. Again he thought of going back to bed, but decided to remain until four o'clock, to speak to the relieving sergeant, a chap he did not quite like. He was the very opposite of Hartmann, a diffident, shy young Frenchman, generally suspected to be liverish—that is to feel more uneasiness in time of danger than a true Legionnaire should feel.

Martier rested his back against the door to the tool house and fumbled for his cigarets. But the wind caught at the thin flame of the matches and when he did succeed in obtaining a light, the loose tobacco flared up into his mouth. Somewhat discouraged, he stood with the match box in one hand and the wreck of the cigaret in the other.

From the spot where he stood, the bulk of Shed 2 blocked the view to the gate, concealed the row of shacks holding bakery, kitchen and telephone. But the sharp angle of the shed was discerned, outlined against the tenuous, uncertain glow thrown by the candle of the telephone shack.

Abruptly, Martier stuffed matches and cigarets into his pockets, loosened the automatic in the holster and walked forward. In the darkness between the officers' quarters and the faint glow, something had stirred, some one had moved. He halted in his stride, half ashamed. A piece of paper, a shifting shadow. Yet, despite this reasoning, the hair on his neck rustled.

"Better have a look, anyway," he grumbled.

He arrived near the buildings, looked in all directions. He discerned nothing and heard the comforting calls of the sentries above him. As he paused near the captain's door, the veteran officer appeared, fully dressed.

"Good morning, Martier."

"Good morning, Captain."

Chance had brought them near enough each other for them to distingush outlines, if not features. A rather good thing,

Martier thought, for his mood of a moment ago might have made him too hasty. His wish to conceal his uneasiness brought the opposite reaction. He said, frankly—

"I *felt* you moving around from across the yard and came on with my pistol ready."

"Strange," Dubroc said. "I was uneasy, too, and thought I saw someone pass before my window." He laughed. "I did not go as far as you did and brought no artillery along. The loss of those guns trots around my bean constantly, I admit. And I don't like to feel that slob can come in here and go out as if this were a windmill."

"I guess we mistook each other for—" Martier shrugged, laughed.

A light appeared in Gerval's window and soon the sublieutenant opened his door. He was fully dressed.

"Anything wrong?" he asked.

"No," Dubroc replied, and explained the situation.

"If you both thought you saw some one," Gerval offered, "why not have a search made."

"Nonsense," Dubroc retorted. "We'd find nothing, and we'd look like maiden ladies peering under their beds. Did we awake you, young man?"

"Haven't slept, Captain."

"You'll have a hard trip tomorrow. You better rest."

"I guess so."

Dubroc slapped his pockets in a familiar gesture, seeking for his cigars.

"No smokes. I'm going inside to get them, Martier; then I'll come back and relieve you until daylight. At my age, a man no longer needs much sleep."

"Cold night," Martier said when the captain had vanished.

"Yes, cold," Gerval agreed.

Martier stepped away, laid his hand on the door to his own room, then turned away. He did not wish to go to bed, had a strong, unexpected reluctance to enter his own quarters. Instead of retracing his steps and going near Gerval, he walked farther, toward the office, then started up the stairway flanking the long barrack, toward the crest of the wall.

Halfway up, he turned, hearing a door open, recalled that he should have waited to speak to Dubroc and started down again. There was some confusion below. Martier thought he heard a grunt, like a long sinister sigh. He saw Gerval dart from his lighted doorway into the yard—and, without transition, so swiftly and unexpectedly that Martier thought himself mad—the great body of Hartmann stood before Gerval.

Hallucination, vision fomented by too long dwelling on the subject? No—for Gerval dodged back almost instantly, and Hartmann ran toward the front wall, merged with the shadows.

Martier drew his pistol and fired without hesitation, at random, in the general direction taken by the deserter. At the same time Gerval called out loudly—

"*Alerte, alerte!*"

The sergeant on duty ran out, his whistle shrilled, and half nude men appeared, swarmed around Martier, going to their posts on the wall. A rocket went up, swung high and drenched the yard with its livid, violent glare. At another moment, the spectacle would have been ludicrous—barefoot, barelegged men with nightshirts flopping around their hairy shanks, all with rifles and cartridge pouches, not a few having, mechanically, slapped *képis* on their heads.

Before Martier could decide whether to run to the wall or cross the yard, an outcry decided him for the first course.

"There he goes, under the wires!"

Shots followed. Then darkness fell, torn an instant later by a second rocket. Martier was still in time to distinguish a running figure making for the bushes far below.

"He's got some in him," a man cried jubilantly. "I saw him stagger. He's got some—"

Darkness again. Martier, having seen Hartmann reach safety, went down below. Again he was facing that unsolvable puzzle. How had the man entered? How had he, in the few seconds between meet-

ing Gerval and being seen under the wires managed to pass through or over the walls?

A DOZEN lanterns had appeared. Martier tried to quiet the men—no, there was no attack—Hartmann had been discovered inside the enclosure and had fled. No, he had taken no rifles; no, he had hurt no one.

He found Gerval speaking to Captain Dubroc, who was standing against the door of Martier's room. That door was opened. Dubroc was explaining in a cool voice:

"Ah—there you are Martier. I thought, naturally, that you had gone to your room—and I followed, having something —I'll be damned if I remember what it was now—to say to you. I pushed the door open and went in. That big devil struck at me with a knife, but fortunately he hit the buckle of my belt. But it took my breath away and I rested here—"

"He came nose to nose with Gerval—" Martier began.

"Gerval had no gun," Dubroc said quickly.

Martier understood this light way of dismissing the sub-lieutenant's excessively speedy retreat. They were now surrounded by men, by sergeants, several of whom carried lanterns.

"He went toward the kitchen," Martier said. "We'll find out—"

Dubroc nodded, took a step forward, lurched and caught at the lieutenant's shoulder.

"It still hurts devilishly, my friend."

He passed his free hand over the spot, started and lifted the fingers before his eyes.

"But, *sacrebleu*, that's blood! He cut me, after all. Martier, you take charge of the men while I go inside and see what's the matter."

"May I help you?" Gerval asked.

"No, no." Dubroc straightened, beckoned to Sergeant Gunther. "Your shoulder, my lad. God—the stuff's pouring down my legs— I think I took what was meant for you, Martier, even if not purposely." He laughed. "Well, go and see if you can find out. Now is the time—"

The telephonist arrived, cigaret in his lips, book closed over one finger, to stand by the door. The ambulance sergeant was sent for. The men followed Martier into the kitchen, where they found nothing; then next door into the bakery. The moment the door was opened, a cloud of ashes flew into their faces, cold wind lifted from the floor. Martier bent, and saw that the long, narrow fireplace between the first oven was a tunnel leading straight outside. Hartmann, having lived in the outpost for some time, knew which night he would find the ashes cold.

A sergeant, who had been with the detachment that had erected the post, then explained that the first plans had called for a much smaller enclosure, of which the present front wall was intended for the rear wall. The fireplace was pierced on one side, then when the new plans were accepted pierced on the other side, and the dried stones hastily replaced. Hartmann had remembered that peculiarity. Martier discovered rather clever work with a knife and on the outside of the wall, camouflage so cleverly contrived that he had seen nothing abnormal the preceding afternoon.

To pass beneath the barbed wire, Hartmann had propped the lower strands, patiently, with forked sticks, high enough to crawl beneath. These sticks he left in place in his hasty departure.

"I guess that ends his little raids," Martier announced.

"He's a clever slob, isn't he, Lieutenant?"

"He is."

"Is the captain much hurt?"

"I don't know. I'm going to see."

He found Dubroc in bed with the ambulance surgeon at his side. The old-timer grinned when he saw the lieutenant.

"Single trip ticket," he stated.

"I don't know for sure, Captain, but it looks bad," the surgeon admitted. "The doctor has been called on the telephone

and will come by special convoy tomorrow morning, Lieutenant."

"You're going to teach me all about belly wounds, young fellow," Dubroc said good humoredly. "No, I'll be glad to see the doctor, but I know that he can do nothing. Here lies Dubroc, Knight of the Legion of Honor—and surely never a major." He laughed and winced. "I have quite a few hours left, Martier, so we'll have a talk and then I'll write my wife—"

"You're married, Captain?"

"You're not half as well informed as Hartmann." Dubroc smiled. "Married, most married, completely married. Sergeant, you may return to bed."

When they were alone he resumed in a different voice—

"You know what I must talk about?"

"Gerval—"

"Yes. He did not shine for bravery."

"No, he did not."

"I was very near. He made no effort at all. But don't let the men hear about it. After all, Gerval is of the Legion."

"Understood, Captain."

"I don't wish to speak to him myself. Coming from a man about to die, it would be too cruel. But let him know he was seen, not only by you but by me. A cowardly act, if I ever saw one. Admitted that Hartmann had a knife and that Gerval was not armed—the sub-lieutenant could have delayed him sufficiently to—you understand—the least cook's helper would have tried, anyway."

"Perhaps, his friendship for the man—"

"That would be worse than cowardice. A Legion officer has no treasonable likings. Or, if he has, which is after all possible and beyond control, he doesn't allow them to interfere with his duty. You don't think any one else saw it?"

"No. My shots, fired after he drew back, started the alarm."

"Tell him—must redeem himself—see?"

"Yes, Captain."

"All right. Now get me some paper, a pencil. Table drawer, that's it. Bring the candle nearer. Good. I can write splendidly this way. Speak to Gerval and report to me in an hour."

"Sure you'll be all right alone?"

"Do I look like a man afraid to die alone? And that's all that could happen to me now. Try to get some sense into that boy, Martier. Don't be too hard. Really, I'm fond of him, feel there's real courage in him, down deep—"

"Down very deep," Martier said with disgust.

He pressed the captain's hand and went out.

Day was just breaking. An uncertain, soft gray fleece hung low, but the eye sensed, lost far in the horizon, the fusing of the sun. The cooks were busy making coffee, clattering their hardware and talking loudly. The reveille bugle strung out its alert notes. Five o'clock.

Martier hesitated, striving to frame the interview with Gerval in advance. A man doesn't enter the Legion to assure himself longevity. There was no excuse for the sub-lieutenant. As Dubroc said, if he had withdrawn from friendship, it was worse than cowardice.

AT LAST he knocked on Gerval's door.

"Come into my room," he invited coldly. "The walls are thin here and I do not wish to disturb the captain."

"He's hurt gravely?"

"Probably will die by midafternoon."

Gerval came out, followed Martier to his room. The lieutenant closed the door and brought down the wooden shutter against the window before lighting the candle in the glass cage. Gerval had slipped in but a few feet and stood, staring at Martier, his back against the wall. He did not seem greatly ashamed of himself, yet showed no defiance. His glance was sad; that was all.

Martier hooked his thumbs in his belt, paced the room on the opposite side, looking quickly toward the younger officer from time to time. The words seemed either inadequate or offensive. Yet something must be said.

"Gerval."

"Oh—" Gerval's shoulders lifted per-

ceptibly— "go ahead. I know what's coming."

"The captain saw you, also. You had a perfect chance to throw yourself on him, grasp his arm—you knew I was not far off—and, anyway, since when does an officer consider personal risk?"

"Since about an hour ago, you believe?"

"Evidently."

"In your eyes I am a coward, then?"

"What else am I to think, Gerval? And, by Jove, Hartmann had saved you from your own cowardice once before."

"You admitted having felt the same yourself."

"True, true—"

"But waive that—" Gerval seemed to wish to take charge of the interview. "You are convinced I am a coward, and I admit I acted like one. What then?"

"Yes, what then?"

"What must I do? Shoot myself?" Gerval laughed grimly.

"No, no. That mends nothing. But you must at least redeem yourself." Martier faced Gerval bruskly. "Cancel your leave; refuse to—"

"I shall not cancel my leave, Martier."

"You'll live six months with that on you? You could live six months without trying to wipe it out?" Martier was angry. "You're in the Legion, Gerval."

"Suppose I told you there was something more important than the Legion?"

"There is nothing," Martier stated. "You don't consider your life more important, by any chance."

"At this moment, evidently, I do."

"And you say it!" Martier came forward.

"Yes."

Martier's hand resounded on the sublieutenant's cheeks twice.

"You'll bear even that calmly."

Gerval smiled, took a cigaret from a package on the dresser, crossed to the candle to light it.

"If you knew—but then you wouldn't understand. You're fortunate, Martier. You're without entrails save for your career. But, by heaven, you haven't a light hand."

"Sit down, Gerval. I apologize in so far as I am concerned for what I have done. The blows escaped me—the nervousness of the night—the captain. To know the Legion and to scorn it—to place anything above the Legion. However, I lost dignity and must try to understand you. Now, quite calmly, I don't think you are a coward. I liked you and I am seldom deceived. But, for a moment, you found your friendship too strong, too overwhelming. It was a hasty, unreflected movement that drew you back—and not fear?"

Gerval bent his head and tears glistened on his cheeks.

"I don't blame you, Martier. I don't blame you. It's worse than you think. Since Hartmann deserted, stole the guns, I would have shot him without hesitation—"

"Then what made you withdraw?"

"Fear."

"Cowardice?"

"No," Gerval stated. "Fear."

"Fear of what, Gerval?"

"Fear of being killed."

Martier reached his hand out and clasped Gerval's limp fingers in it comfortingly.

"Those things happen. You were unlucky. Come, Gerval, let me go back to the captain and tell him you'll remain, stay here—and go forward with the column when it moves into rebel territory. You can atone. You are not to blame for his death. He was struck before—you made your error."

"I must go on leave. Let me explain—"

"No!" Martier said violently. "I want no explanations. There can be nothing more important than for you to make up for what you have done. I can get a signed statement from the captain and place you under arrest. You would be tried. You were in a position to halt the flight of a deserter, to capture a dangerous man. Death was by no means certain, yet you avoided the risk. You'd be judged privately, but you'd get your leave and get

it for good. If you wish to stay in the Legion cancel your leave and look for a chance to make up—"

"No one knows, save you two. It can not harm—"

"In twenty-four hours I will be the only one to know. But it will harm," Martier declared. "There'll be one man in the Legion who'll feel that there's another who can't be trusted to do his duty. When one gets tired or fears one's duty it is more manly to desert to the enemy—like Hartmann."

"The Legion—" Gerval murmured.

He rested his face in his hands and remained hunched over the table for a long while. Martier stared toward the candle, where the tallow dripped steadily down the smooth white shaft. His whole being revolted against what he was witnessing.

"Martier — Martier —" Gerval whispered at last.

"What do you want?"

"Martier, get that report from the captain if you wish, but I beg you, yes, I beg you, not to turn it in for awhile. I can't stay. Can't you understand? I can't stay."

"Why not?" Martier pressed him.

"You'll listen to me—you'll listen to me?"

"Yes."

"I—I—" Gerval halted abruptly. "But I can not tell you. You might say I should stay anyway, and I'd be a real coward then, and stay—and blame you for having stayed. To understand you must have lived my life, Martier, my whole life. You can't understand. It would seem a small reason to you. Listen! I promise to come back, to do anything you wish—later. But I must go now."

"What is it?" Martier insisted. "A woman?" As Gerval did not answer, he repeated, "A woman?"

"Yes—"

Martier rose.

"If you have a jane in your marrow, it's useless to argue. Go your way. Dubroc wouldn't sign a report. He is too good. And he wouldn't want his last signature to go at the bottom of a report accusing a Legion officer of cowardice. Get out of my room!"

"You're not going to report me?"

"No—"

"Thank you, Martier."

The lieutenant propped up the shutter and daylight flooded in. He blew out the candle. Then he opened the door.

"Get out," he repeated wearily.

IN THE morning the doctor arrived in the big Breguet plane outfitted as an ambulance. While the military surgeon was examining Dubroc, the men gathered in the yard waiting for news.

Whether one of the sentries on guard had witnessed the scene in the yard or whether it was instinct on the Legionnaires' part, they were very cool to Gerval. There was no show of that man-to-man affection granted a popular chief. The sub-lieutenant seemed to sense this, concluded his business in the office, shook hands with the non-coms present and retired to his room to await the convoy.

"Any hope, Major?" Martier asked, when the doctor was washing his hands in his room.

"I'd say no, offhand."

He was a lean, tall chap, forty-odd years old, hiding his lasting sympathy for suffering under a professional bruskness.

"But your captain has such devilish strength, so much reserve vitality that he might support an operation—ticklish thing. You see—" He went into details, illustrating against the lieutenant's stomach. "It's been done successfully. I saw a case—at Verdun in '16—practically had to give our man new intestines. I'll take him down to Meknes. By the way, they told me at Kenefra that you had an officer going on leave. There's room for him—and he might cheer Captain Dubroc a bit."

"I don't think it would be best for Captain Dubroc," Martier replied.

The doctor looked at Martier briefly.

"I understand."

Martier went to see Dubroc.

"Seems they can't let me die here," the

captain said. "Have you seen our young friend since he refused to give up his leave?"

"No. He's in his room."

"Bring him out to say goodby to me. It will still any rumor. There has been enough dissension here, enough trouble. I'd like the men to keep a good taste of their former officers. By the way, you become post commander quicker than you imagined."

"I'd sooner have done without."

"I know. I know," Dubroc laughed shortly. "The inquest into the loss of the guns is ended. The man responsible will soon be out of reach. The *toubib's* taking me for a last ride. At that, it would be original for a captain of Legion to die between clouds and earth."

Men carefully picked up the stretcher and Dubroc was taken outside. There many of the men touched his hand gingerly. Not a few wept. The Mokhazenis also came down to salute the departing leader.

Martier had sought Gerval, who came out.

"Goodby, Gerval. Good leave."

"Thank you, Captain. Best of luck to you."

The hands touched. Then Martier walked to the plane by the side of the stretcher, saw Dubroc comfortably installed within.

"Hope matters run more sanely than until now," Dubroc concluded. "You and I know we shall not meet again—in life. Farewell, Martier, and long live the Legion!"

Martier choked suddenly, pressed the limp hand in his own. To him, to all men in the Legion, there could be no affectation, no staginess about those words. They were as sacred as a profession of religious faith. When men die for words, they are hallowed, devoid of the trite, lifted above the puerile commonplace.

The door to the cabin closed, a Legionnaire gave the prop a quick turn and the big plane slid off, rose, vanished at last toward the north. In less than two hours Dubroc would be operated upon. When the vibrating dot had disappeared from the sky, Martier turned and re-entered the enclosure. He overheard two men, speaking purposely to be overheard, commenting on the events of the morning.

"The captain didn't suggest that Gerval visit him at Meknes, when he reaches it. And Gerval didn't say a word about it. There's something happened we know nothing about, I'm telling you."

"Eh—when Hartmann is mixed up in anything you know where the sub-lieutenant stands."

Martier, convinced though he was that the words were meant for him, passed without giving a sign of understanding. It was the way common to practically all privates to permit an officer to know that they were not deceived by official ceremonies.

When the convoy of trucks made ready for the return trip to Kenefra, Gerval appeared from his room and directed the disposal of his baggage. Martier escorted him to his seat, reached up to shake hands with him.

"Goodby, Gerval. Good leave."

"Goodby, Martier. Good luck."

The sub-lieutenant straightened and told the chauffeur he was ready. The truck rolled out behind the others and the Legionnaires of the escort waved their hands, brandished their rifles in farewell. The gates closed.

"Good riddance," said a voice at Martier's side.

Again the lieutenant paid no heed and walked off. Gunther was waiting in the office and together they established the new routine to be followed at El-Hajez.

CHAPTER V

GERVAL'S STORY

THE FOLLOWING day, by telephone, came news of Dubroc's death. The small flag was lowered to half mast and Martier gathered the garrison and made a short speech, evoking the services of the captain, saluting in him a Legionnaire. Secret agents among the

tribes reported that Hartmann had been severely wounded in the hip by a chance bullet during his escape, so there was little need to worry about his activities for awhile.

Of Gerval Martier received no direct news. But Gunther told him that the telephonist had told one of the corporals that he had heard over the wire from a friend in Kenefra that the lieutenant there had received a postal card from Gerval written before sailing from Casablanca to Marseilles. Two weeks later, by the same channel, Martier heard that the lieutenant in Kenefra had received another postal card from France.

Meanwhile the Hartmann case had attracted considerable attention from headquarters because of Dubroc's death. At the next court-martial, the former corporal was tried and condemned by default—military degradation and execution. A government decision came within two months: Captain Dubroc was cited posthumously, made officer of the Legion of Honor. Further, it was announced that the outpost of El-Hajez, the last command he held, would thereafter be known of Post Dubroc. Having no children, he had willed his decorations to his old battalion, the one that had received him a recruit.

Aside from this news, routine matters rolled without trouble at Post Dubroc. The watch towers were left severly alone by the natives. Fatigue parties gathering wood were not attacked. There were rumors that the dissident tribes of the neighborhood were demanding a truce, opening negotiations for complete peace and entry into the white lambs of the protectorate. If that came to pass, Hartmann would probably be turned in by the natives at the post, if he had not died from his wound, or from assassination by some rabid mountaineer who remembered his former allegiance. Or, during one of the many raids, he would be compelled to undertake risks for the benefit of the tribe which had sheltered him.

At the end of the second month a sub-lieutenant arrived to replace Gerval, who had been transferred to a company in Meknes to which he was to report on his return from leave. The new officer, Marius Sutari, an old-timer, had served the last two years in Indo-China and had brought back a taste for cold drinks and a liver as hard as a cement block.

Martier soon learned to like him in spite of his grouchy ways. For Sutari had the right system, preferred to handle sulky men himself rather than turn them out before court-martials. In the Foreign Legion the problem of wedding independence with discipline must be solved.

Sutari's one big fault, from a companionship point of view, was the Napoleonic complex which the majority of Corsicans nurture.

In the course of an afternoon chat, Sutari would pacify Morocco with a few deft, brilliant moves of his own invention, or, picking up the World War, end it as early as May 1915 in a complete rout of the Central Powers, by means of fierce drives upon the communications. With perfect good grace and true loyalty, the sub-lieutenant placed the March Regiment at the point of honor and danger.

"With that to start with, everything would have gone off on wheels. You comprehend, Martier?"

Martier knew better than to make objections. If he showed the least disbelief he was faced by figures and facts, by batteries of artillery disposed cleverly. One need not be a sorcerer, Sutari himself admitted; Napoleon had outlined all that.

For Hartmann, Sutari grew the prettiest case of hatred Martier had seen in many years. He had served as private in a mounted company in which Dubroc had been an excellent sergeant. Sutari's first encounter with Hartmann occurred three and a half months after Dubroc's death.

He had been given command of a detachment of forty men, to relieve the small garrisons of the outlaying towers and blockhouses. He had achieved this mission to its end, and was nearing home, between Tower No. 1 and Post Dubroc. Lulled into a sense of security by the calm prevailing in the region, he permitted the

four Mokhazenis employed as scouts to go ahead, urging their beasts up the last slopes to get to their wives the sooner. His detachment, progressing in columns by three, sprawled over quite a stretch of trail and lost unity.

"Suddenly," Sutari related to Martier later, "my *képi* left my head. At the same time the Chleuhs started to howl, and the bullets came from everywhere. I didn't even know which way to face for a moment. Then I heard some one bellow in French, calling me names. Yes, there he was, showing himself in plain sight, five hundred meters away. I headed for him—that was as good as anything else—and my fellows ran after me.

"Well, he dodged out of sight into a clump of bushes. He must have been pretty badly hit that other time, because he hobbles now. We reached the spot and were looking for him when a hell of a row started on the trail. They were trying to grab two cases of cartridges on one of the mules. They killed the mule and were fighting our fellow when we reached them. It lacked five minutes of goodby for those cases. After that, things settled down, nice and quiet. We have three wounded. But we found blood spots a couple of places, though they carried dead and wounded away."

"This promises a merry life," Martier grumbled, "if he is loose again."

The pessimistic prediction was justified. Two days later, twelve men gathering firewood were attacked unexpectedly. Before the men could get back to their rifles, left under the guard of two men and a corporal, three of the guns vanished. In this instance, no one could be blamed, for men could not work with weapons in their hands, and the guards were busy protecting their own skins.

Three days went by and the sentry at Tower No. 1 was brought in with a smashed shoulder. He explained that at daylight he had relaxed a little, shown himself while innocently admiring the beauties of awaking nature, and had been shot upon from the outside. Hartmann was there, because he had addressed each man by name, inciting him to desertion. He had even proposed mass abandonment of post to the corporal in command, who had retorted with rifle shots.

Three days later one of the Mokhazenis was dropped from ambush, a kilometer from the walls, pounced upon before his comrades reached him, neatly beheaded and frightfully mutilated. This time Hartmann made eloquent appeals in purest Berber, calling them to task for traitors, offering them loot and women if they returned to their true allegiance.

TWO WEEKS after Hartmann's appearance, the post was in the same state of nervousness it had known before Dubroc's murder. Sentries fired into the darkness; rockets went up under all and any pretext; and wood gatherers went out grimly, uncomplaining, with the attitude of men sacrificed in advance.

Martier undertook some counter-ambushes. But Hartmann was familiar with the preferred spots of the Legionnaires and did not try to cope with them. He knew better than to precipitate night encounters in which hand grenades took a large part. While the volunteers lay stretched on the damp earth, they would listen to a concert of detonations elsewhere and learn that they had selected the wrong spot to watch.

Hartmann's great advantage lay in the fact that he had watchmen stationed within sight of the post constantly, to report all movements, while his own gangs, starting from villages deep in rebel soil, arrived at their destinations unexpectedly. Hartmann could not be betrayed by secret agents, for he evidently never revealed his plans in advance, even to his followers.

Often Martier was called to the telephone to speak with the base commander, a major of infantry, trained in quiet French garrisons and filled with notions of warfare derived from the trenches.

"*Eh bein!* That Hartmann affair, Martier. Anything new?"

"No, Major."

"It's ridiculous to permit that man to—"

"If you have any suggestions, Major, I should be glad—"

"Suggestions, suggestions! I am not up there! Other posts manage to keep their sectors quiet. The man is not a sorcerer, is he?"

"Sometimes, I wonder."

"And those famous counter-ambushes I hear so much about? You have tried them? Something must be done."

"If I could only once obtain advance information, Major."

"Yes, yes. I thought of that myself. Well, Martier, try and have some news soon, won't you?"

Martier tried his best, without success. Groping for greased eels in the dark was an easy task compared to catching Hartmann unawares on his chosen field. He felt moments of bitter humiliation when he penned reports of attacks, a man wounded here, a stolen carbine elsewhere.

Hartmann chose those moments to come to his old speaking post, the knot of trees, and from there address uncomplimentary remarks to Martier and his men. Somehow, he had learned of Sutari's particular dislike for him and usually found some new insult to coax a burst of rage from the irritable Corsican.

"Eh, Sutari, old barrack hound! You haven't put your nose out for a week. Are you afraid?" Sutari would pale and grind his teeth, dreading the final insult which drove all restraint from his soul. "Must be true, what I heard! You know what? They say you're not a Corsican at all, but an Italian!"

For no definite reason, being called an Italian hurt Sutari deeply. Had it not been for Martier, he would have gone out—to certain death.

"No sign of thee, d'Annunzio!"

Then Hartmann, satisfied that he had seared the sub-lieutenant's brain, would shift to Martier, to Gunther, and finally leave. The worst of the matter was that the men actually looked forward to these scenes and massed below to watch Sutari. Invariably, Martier was forced to refuse permission to the sub-lieutenant to go forth on ambush. A man of Sutari's temperament might well have led a dozen men to massacre. Night patrolling needs a dose of cold bloodedness which the Corsican utterly lacked.

One afternoon Gunther knocked on Martier's door.

"Major is on the telephone, Lieutenant."

Martier groaned. The brief conversations, always alike, had become an obsession. They formed about the worst feature of what the base officer was pleased to call "the Hartmann affair".

"Here, Lieutenant Martier."

"How are you? I have good news for you. You can not catch Hartmann. The government will try to catch him for you. A mobile group is being formed to operate in your region. There'll be a march battalion, half Legion, half Tirailleurs, and your bunch will be attached to it. A company of Senegalese will replace you at Post Dubroc. Draw up the requirements for your men and send it down to me."

"Yes, Major."

"Between ourselves, I believe this will be a genuine operation, with results. I wouldn't be surprised if we obtained complete submission from the tribes around your way — consequently Hartmann's carcass."

Martier went to the office and announced the news. The report spread through the barracks; men ran out to get confirmation from the bulletin board.

> The detachment stationed at Post Dubroc will form part of the March Battalion. Only men of irreproachable conduct between now and the actual formation of the column will be permitted to participate. Those who are punished for indiscipline, drunkenness, or uncleanliness physically or in their equipment will be sent to Meknes with the depot company.

Fighting as a reward for meritorious behavior, fighting, with the golden opportunity to win the War Cross, the Military Medal, and, if nothing more offered, at least the blue and white ribbon of the Colonial Badge. Column meant an added bit of color on the breast of the khaki

capote, when a man swaggers through the civilian crowds of large cities. It meant fatigue, wounds, death; but also extra wine, extra privileges and leaves.

Martier therefore might have believed himself the director of a young ladies' finishing school for the next ten days. Between the moment he tacked up the notice to the first faint ringing of approaching bugles below, one felt wings sprouting between the crossed beltings of their martial harness.

MARTIER'S section attained its assigned objective. The automatic riflemen placed their weapons in position; purveyors ran up to place reserve magazines on a level with the muzzles of the guns. Grenadiers and *voltigeurs* filled the intervals.

"Any breakage?" Martier asked.

"No, Lieutenant." Gunther saluted. "Sub-lieutenant Sutari has just signaled that he has had no casualties."

"Not bad," the lieutenant approved. "From the whistling, I thought we were losing a lot of men on the way here."

"The range's a little too long," Gunther gave as his opinion, "and they're uneasy because of the thirty seven-millimeter cannon on their flanks. Just listen to that—" the sergeant snapped his fingers and grinned. "What they're taking over there!"

From the right came the heavy detonations of one of the little pieces of artillery and the explosions of rifle grenades. An undertone was formed by the hysterical coughing of automatic rifles. Occasionally one might behold a little column of dirt and yellow-green smoke fusing prettily above the bushes and treetops.

On the emplacement where Martier found himself, halfway up a slope covered with high grass, shrubs and boulders, the resistance was lessening—one could sense a weakening of morale on the other side. The mountaineers evidently had had their bellyful of fighting and aspired to a quick retreat and the quiet of their homes. But they were surrounded almost completely, blocked, immobilized in this sector, by the culmination of a rather good plan.

The group of which Martier's section formed part was one of the four groups, which, each starting from a different base, seemingly independent of each other, had bruskly shifted direction and converged toward one sector. This was according to the best traditions, following a pattern adapted to colonial fighting in mountainous regions by Gallieni, when a colonel in the Tonkin.

When such an operation succeeds it succeeds beautifully; and when it fails, it fails completely. It needs a good leader—and excellent troops. Above all, it must have, for success, absolute confidence from above, absolute confidence from below. The commander, former lieutenant-colonel in the Legion, demoted to an ordinary general, had been granted both.

A metallic drone vibrated in the sky and a plane appeared.

"Put out the panels, objective attained," Martier ordered.

The front of the section was dotted by white canvas signals, a long oblong, a triangle, another long oblong. When the machine flew over, Martier ordered a confirmation, and a three-star white rocket went up. Soon after bugles resounded a familiar call—cease firing.

The lieutenant commanding the machine gun section on Martier's right and the captain commanding the company of Moroccan Tirailleurs on his left came to join him. He was in a better position to see ahead of the present line than they were. Glasses were unslung, sketches modified.

"I think this will be over in two or three days," said the captain. "This suspension of fire, Martier, probably means that the *bicos* will talk things over."

"Hope they do," the machine gunner put in. "From now on, it would be a massacre. Those fellows are infernally brave, but I hope they're not damned foolish."

Sutari arrived, having turned his men over to a sergeant. He was perspiring; the skin was peeling off his face. Like the others, he showed few traces of elegance.

Six weeks of hard campaigning had a blighting effect upon trim uniforms.

"Always the same thing," he exclaimed. "When we should hold back we attack. When we should attack, we halt. Those fellows up there shouldn't be permitted to draw breath."

"But we should," the Tirailleur captain declared. "Another two hundred meters up this slope under this sun and you'd see some floating in the lines."

"Say, Martier, you were at Post Dubroc before, weren't you?" the machine gunner asked.

"Yes."

"You must have known Gerval."

"I did. Only together a few weeks, though. He went on leave and then was transferred."

"Know he's here, don't you?"

"Heard about it. Group 2, isn't he?"

"That's it."

"I hear he has his second stripe," Sutari said.

"Yes. Full fledged lieutenant. He's young, but he deserved it. Three years of Morocco steady, including sixteen combats. At that, he is a zealous bird; he cut short his leave two months to be in on this show. Most fellows would have stayed six months and then claimed their Tonkin turn, by right."

"He's after the Legion of Honor," the Tirailleur captain suggested.

"Sure," Sutari agreed. "He's in the right place to win it! Battalion P. C., isn't he?"

"No," the machine gunner corrected. "Second bureau, specially attached to this column."

"Information service?" Martier asked.

"Yes. Seems he speaks the languages beautifully. By the way, curious coincidence, Martier. I hear it was your particular pest who coached him—the celebrated Corporal Hartmann."

"There's one who's using his gifts," the Tirailleur said.

"Just let me get my hands on him," Saturi grumbled.

A bugle call broke up the conversation. The officers scattered on the run back to their posts, all within a couple of hundred meters. Martier gave the signal to resume the advance and his three groups marched forward. From time to time a slug flew nearby, or sunk into the moist soil with a gasping sigh. Fifty meters up the slope, the Automatic Rifle 1 fired upon a cluster of natives, who had lagged behind the bulk of their forces to snipe.

Martier strode forward, with his runners behind him, waiting for orders. He carried a walking stick under his left arm and gave his instructions almost mechanically.

"Kuntz, hold your fire. No. 2, bear to the right. Magrel, do you want me to help you get on line?"

Magrel, a wiry private, was hobbling in the rear.

"Got to stop, Lieutenant—"

"You can stop at the next halt. If you hang back now, the Chleuhs will give you more than a bellyache! *Allez! allez!*"

Gunther, automatic pistol in hand, walked behind Martier. He had contrived to light a pipe and was smoking contentedly, showing off. This undertaking was little for him, who had attacked at Verdun, with the Prussian infantry.

Finally the signal to halt came.

"No casualties," Gunther reported dutifully. He stood for a moment watching the section take position, lay out the signals for the plane, then said casually, "Was talking to a sergeant of the machine gun section just before. He says that Gerval is a lieutenant now. It's a funny thing—pretty young, isn't he, Lieutenant? Bah! Some guys know how to swim all right."

To know how to "swim" means to know how to get along in life. Gunther sought motives for Gerval's promotion in mysterious maneuvers on the young man's part.

"And Captain Dubroc never got his fourth stripe," the sergeant concluded.

"Gunther, did I ask you anything?" Martier queried.

"No, Lieutenant."

"All right. You should know better

than to discuss your superior's affairs, Sergeant."

"You're right to say what you're saying, Lieutenant."

"Thanks."

"But I wasn't wrong." Gunther slid a glance toward Martier and desisted. "All right, all right, Lieutenant. I'm silent."

MARTIER sat down and smoked another cigaret. Probably another conference was going on between the commander of the united groups and the *kaids* of the tribesmen. It would be preferable for both sides to call a truce. On the French side every one knew that over the brink of the hills were other hills, one of them surrounded by a fortified village, a *kasbah*. Even pulverized by artillery, enough riflemen would remain in the ruins to take a heavy toll of life. The big question to settle was the surrender of arms. The natives always took a good deal of punishment before consenting to turn over their weapons.

At last a staff captain came up, announcing that terms had been made to permit natives, isolated or in small groups, to go to a concentration base in the valley, if they laid down their arms before crossing the lines. This arrangement had been arranged because the natives were divided among themselves as to whether they would give up or not. A small number of die-hards wished to fight to the end; the rest were fed up. These latter would be permitted to act upon their actual wishes.

Soon the mountaineers appeared in groups, among them many women, many children. The men were husky, bearded fellows, in ragged *djellabas*, bearing knifes slung around their necks on strings, or passed through rope belts. Searched by Legionnaires for arms, they were then formed into small columns which went below under guard of irregular cavalry. Fatigue parties, led by non-commissioned officers of engineers, arrived from the supply convoy to collect the guns.

Martier recognized several of the mountaineers, men he had met on the trails near Post Dubroc, strolling peacefully, having, no doubt, hidden their guns under bushes at his approach. They greeted him cordially.

"Greetings, Chief!"

"God's blessings on thee—"

The Legionnaires also had acquaintances in the lot, women who had roamed about the walls. There was quite a little good natured joking back and forth.

Martier halted a man who from his dress was of some importance.

"Thou art from the village of El-Haouz?"

"Yes, Lord."

"It was among your people that our man took shelter when he fled from us. Where has he gone?"

"He was with us. I saw him but a few moments ago, Lord. He was speaking most loudly against asking for terms."

The mountaineer scratched his beard thoughtfully. He did not smile but humor twinkled in his slate-gray eyes.

"It may be—God knows if I am right—that it is not to his interest to be among you again!"

When all who cared to give up the struggle had been accepted in the French lines, the advance resumed, and nightfall found the section camped on the exact crest of the hill. Trenches were hastily dug, shallow, but sufficient to anchor resistance in case of night attack.

According to custom, sentries were placed well ahead, near together, to form a pliant first barrier, supported by machine guns. Parties went down for hot stew; pails of wine were brought up. Reduced to a fifth of their original strength, the Chleuhs were not greatly to be feared, and a wise chief had given permission for these unusual privileges on the field.

Martier ate with the officers of the Tirailleur company, chatted awhile. Then he sought his blankets, slid into the long sleeping bag. The stars were limpid, pinned like glittering drops of ice on plushy, blue-black velvet. He smoked a last cigaret, relaxed.

Gunther awoke him, not very long after.

"Some one to see you, Lieutenant," he announced.

"Officer?"

"From the staff."

Martier emerged from his bag, shook himself, buttoned his coat and slipped on his beltings. Then he went to meet the newcomer. A lieutenant, rather tall, slim —Martier could not at first distinguish his features, and offered his hand.

"Good evening," the other said, without accepting the greeting. "You do not recognize me, Lieutenant Martier?"

Martier started—

"Gerval?"

"In person. I shall probably, certainly, be inflicted on you for a few hours, Lieutenant. But on official business, so I pray you'll forgive me."

"Did you spend a good leave, Gerval?" Martier asked.

"The best possible leave, under the circumstances. Will you please consult this paper?" Gerval pressed a sheet into Martier's hand, then brought out a pocket flashlight.

Martier saw, with astonishment, that he was placed "at Lieutenant Gerval's disposal for special mission." He was to follow faithfully all suggestions regardless of their nature, his responsibility being fully covered.

"At your orders, Lieutenant," he concluded.

"The next official order can not come before four in the morning, Lieutenant," Gerval resumed. "May I ask, however, for a few minutes of your time."

"I am at your disposal," Martier stated.

"Yes, that's true."

Gerval led the way down the slope and the two sat down on cartridge crates. Close together, in the darkness, they might have been thought close friends enjoying a battlefield reunion.

"Tomorrow, I shall try to make up, in a measure, for what happened at Post Dubroc," Gerval said. "Until then, now, will you listen and try to understand?" he asked.

Martier was quite calm.

"Of course," he said.

"MY FATHER," began Gerval, "was without profession. He was a huge muscular man with an inborn distaste for work. His father had been much like him. He had inherited the family mansion, a sort of shack on the outskirts of eastern France. After serving his time in the army, sometime around the early nineties, my father came back home lazier than before. He could not even sign his name. He signed the document for his marriage with a cross. For living he chopped wood occasionally, poached the year around, fished out of season in the river flowing near our home.

"My mother was the daughter of a local seamstress, whose rather indefinite husband left his bones somewhere around Lang-Son in the Tonkin, when Negrier's expedition came to grief up there. He was a sergeant of marines, and it was perhaps from that roaming grandfather that I got that cursed, inborn love for gold braid and uniforms.

"My mother—I've heard that when she was married, she was blond, slight, rather pretty. One thing I know, Martier; she had eyes like blue diamonds. She fell in love with my father—she must have, for he had nothing in the world save his big body and his cheery ways—and went to live with him in his shack. She had five sons in succession. I was the youngest.

"When I was five years old, something happened, which for awhile might have been thought lucky, grim as it must sound. My father had nets for pike in the river and went out at night to pick them up. The police had been on the watch and were ready to arrest him. He dived overboard, pushed his rowboat away and swam toward shore. He waited there all night and part of the morning, in icy water, while the cops searched for him.

"He came home half dead and, after a couple of weeks of fever, was buried. My brothers, ranging from fourteen to twenty, were set to work. The oldest was in the saw mill, with the second. The third rented himself out as farm hand and the fourth was running errands for the

butcher. My mother did housework around town. She was quite sober, never stole and was greatly liked. We knew an era of prosperity then.

"My brothers could not apprentice themselves to learn trades, because they had to bring in real money right away. They were fond of me and decided that I should have a chance to do something big, lawyer or doctor. By that time I had started to cut out paper soldiers. I said I wanted to be in the army—as an officer.

"I went to school and got good marks. For the first time the people in the town saw a Gerval who wore shoes the year round, who read books and did not run off to set traps for birds and fish. My mother was quite proud of me.

"Martier, I was always a little off my head, a prig, for I recall quite clearly that when my brothers were serving their time in the army I felt ashamed that they were privates. It seemed they couldn't get anything out of printed books, couldn't learn. Not one of them was even a corporal while other kids had brothers coming home with gold 'sardines' on their sleeves, and the mercer's boy was an adjutant.

"The war came—and naturally, my four brothers went immediately. Two of them were in the active branch anyway; one had scarcely got out; and the fourth was more or less forced to volunteer by his boss, who generously paid half his salary to my mother while he was gone. The second—I will not bother telling their names, they were numbers anyway—was killed first, at Charleroi.

"Six months later, the third followed. He was with the Twentieth Corps, in the north. Mother received a personal letter from the colonel, telling her how brave he had been. She cried over how many wounds he had received before dying, and I cried with emotion at the beautiful words the colonel's secretary had prepared for his chief's signature: True Frenchman, a real Gaul, loved of his comrades and esteemed of his chiefs, and so forth.

"The eldest, with a dismounted regiment of dragoons holding the line in Alsace, was taken prisoner. We got letters through the Red Cross. And mother managed to send a few parcels. I was impatient with him. Others escaped. Why did he not try? A comrade of his succeeded in escaping and came to visit us My brother had tried but had been recaptured and sent to Silesia in the mines.

"The war went on and I studied. My mother worked every day. I was in a sort of dream of glory, fired by the resounding articles in the newspapers, full of self-sacrifice, devotion to the motherland. Occasionally the fourth son came on leave, for a few days. He was worn, haggard, and said openly that he hoped the war wouldn't last much longer. He was bitter, didn't see the beauty of the task he was helping to achieve. When he talked to mother about the Front I'd leave the room so as not to say what I thought.

"His last leave was in February, 1918. I was already quite big and got sore because he told me I shouldn't enlist. He went back and a few weeks later was killed at Kemel, with the famous regiment that held on to the last man.

" 'There,' my mother said violently when she got the telegram, 'there are no more. I've suffered all I'm going to.'

"The eldest came back home. Three years of exposure and bad food had not left much of him. He was thin, sickly, and often would swoon after eating. It was some time before he was in shape to go to work. Three sons dead for France. Mother got a little money from the government. My brother also, for he was reformed and on an allowance. But pensions were on the old scale and living on the new. Also, I had to study for my career, so we sold the shack and went to Paris where the schools were better, where I could prepare for my examinations. There my mother found difficulty locating new customers for housework. She was fifty and looked older. My brother, who was neither strong nor educated, did many things, from peddling newspapers to waiting in cafés. He was about thirty and looked forty-five. Finally he got a job classifying card indexes. Didn't bring much, but it was steady work.

"I passed my examinations with flying colors. And I had my two years in the Academy. Toward the end I went on leave. While there I had an argument with my brother over the war. Mother mixed in to try and make peace—and said something about sacrifices made for me. So I walked out.

"I left school and went to a regiment in central France. Then I asked for transfer to Morocco, did pretty well in the Tirailleurs in garrison life, and finally coaxed my way into the Legion. With the first fighting I realized what my brothers had done—and suffered. I wrote and apologized. I was horrified at myself. Mother replied that I was foolish, that I didn't understand that she had enjoyed giving me what I wanted.

"I wanted to see her, but leave always came due as my battalion was bound for dangerous duty, and I passed it up according to custom. You remember when my leave was offered me at the post I decided to wait until Hartmann was captured or killed? Then, while you were investigating the theft of the four rifles, the mail came with a letter for me.

"My brother had caught cold in his office. Being unimportant, he had been placed near the front door because others didn't like drafts—and he had come home to die. My mother was ill, probably having denied herself proper food. I had sent her part of my pay at intervals, but with the added expenses it wasn't enough. She said she wanted to see me, at least once in my uniform. Then she'd feel her life was not wholly wasted. I decided to leave as soon as possible. You remember you came to my room and found me packing.

"When I came face to face with Hartmann he had that crazy glare that knew nobody. He is a powerful man. I knew I couldn't hold his arm away. In a flash I saw myself stretched on the ground, and a telegram going to my mother with the news that a fifth son had fallen on the field of honor. The Legion, France, you, everything seemed small. My own reputation weighed little. I stepped back. I should have told you all this when you asked me to give up my leave and stay. I don't know what false shame held me back. Perhaps I felt that a man of your upbringing would not understand. At any rate, I left for France.

"My mother lived in a dirty back street back of the Place de la République, six flights up. The first two flights led to the workshop of the pork store on the ground floor, and the handrail was copiously greased by contact with the honest paws of the butcher and his assistants. The stairway smelled of cooking, of grease, of blood.

"On the third floor lived a few girls, working girls. That smelled of perfume. On the fourth floor lived a family with many kids. That smelled of kids. I reached the sixth. It was peopled by neglected old women who seemed to be ascending part of the way in advance. She had only one room, heated by a cast iron stove.

"She was all nose and toothless mouth, her eyes red rimmed, her nose blue and bulging. When she saw it was I who had knocked she was startled and began to cry. I tell you, Martier, I wasn't sorry I had lived to come. There wasn't a sou in the place, and she had to borrow coffee from a neighbor to make a festive meal. She insisted on getting up, moving around.

"I decided that if promotion pleased her I should have it. Here and there I had met persons of importance—on escort duty once for a visiting senator—and I shamelessly danced around until I got a promise. I played up my knowledge of the dialects, got this assignment. It's easier than you'd think, once started, that boot licking of important slobs. I achieved the miracle. My name was printed, by choice, as promoted to lieutenant. I still wonder how I did it.

"I had transferred mother to a hotel room where we had all we needed. It was heart breaking at times, because her mind had gone a little. She'd imagine I was one of my brothers and talk to me of my own future. She had shown my picture to the janitress of the old house, who had not believed she had such a handsome officer for

a son until she had shown her my letters and newspaper paragraphs about me.

"And I sat at her side like a dog, humble, but boasting aloud, planning for the future. I knew that the works were worn out, that she wouldn't last my leave. But I mapped out our life until the time I became general. She accepted all that seriously. She had lost all notion of her age, of mine—of everything.

"One evening she seemed to get back to herself. She looked at me:

" 'Well, son, are you content? Is being an officer all you expected?' 'Yes,' I lied. She went to bed as usual, and never woke up. And here I am . . ."

IS FILIAL love sacred when it is composed principally of remorse? Martier thought. Physical cowardice would have been preferable perhaps to the sickly conceit, the rotten soft streak sapping the man's character.

And after he became an officer in the Legion, private sentiments should have been forgotten. The moment there is one excuse allowed, a thousand excuses pour in. The main strength of the army lies in the fact that it deals, after all, with very definite situations and knows no shading in the meaning of words.

A mother suffered. When there was battle, mothers suffered. His own, should he be brought in dead after some combat, would suffer. And, despite Gerval's concentration upon himself, one should not lose sight of the important fact that many of the Legionnaires had mothers living—and did their duty. The clear of the situation was that Madame Gerval had made her sacrifices for nothing. Her son when he became an officer forgot the first rule that binds men wearing stripes.

It was Gerval's duty to halt Hartmann at the risk of his life. He had pointed out what had prevented him from doing his duty, but nevertheless that duty remained unfilled. Considered with detachment the passing happiness of an old lady did not make up for the loss of life caused by the man Gerval had allowed to escape when a few seconds' delay would have brought help.

Gerval simply forgot and remembered at the wrong time. He had remembered when he was an officer that he should have been a son; he had remembered he was a son when he should have been an officer.

"Am I not to be pitied?" Gerval asked.

"Yes," Martier said simply.

"So you understand?"

"Yes."

Martier had seen Dubroc, who certainly was a man of duty, bear outright insults from privates and refuse to bring them to accounting, saying he understood. Men are understood by their officers in time of comparative calm, so that much may be expected of them in emergency. The Legion is not a place for misunderstood men to get understanding, but a place where fighting men are treated with indulgence under condition that they die when called upon.

"And now," Martier said, "tell me what we are to do tomorrow."

"Effect the capture of Hartmann."

"Have you information?"

"Better. You know that the final junction of the groups took place this morning. We pushed the natives back on all sides upon the *kasbah* across the valley."

"And we have, altogether, five battalions of infantry, six platoons of cavalry, some three thousand native auxiliaries mounted and on foot. We have five batteries of 75's, that is twenty pieces of field artillery besides the smaller cannon attached to each battalion."

"The general called a halt this afternoon," Gerval said. "And I went forward with the information captain to meet the *kaids*. They are not fools. We pointed out that we could pour five hundred shells a minute upon the *kasbah*, with a bombing squad of five Breguets available, with machine guns, automatic rifles, grenades, they could be massacred without a chance to fight. The surrenders started all along the line. We know for a fact that by morning the rest will give up. But one element of their forces will hold out and

try to flee—the traitors. There are native troopers of all types who have deserted to the enemy as you know: Spahis, Mokhazenis, Goumiers, Magzhen, Tirailleurs. Perhaps thirty-odd. There were, yesterday, three Legionnaires. One was killed, another captured."

"There remains only Hartmann, then?"

"He knows the game is up. He'll try to escape in the morning when he loses all hope of gathering enough mountaineers to make an attempt to break through by force of arms. There is one ravine left unguarded, purposely—there are certain men among the natives whom we wish to escape. These have been quietly informed, being in our service. Hartmann will receive the information before daylight. Your section will be on his path. Understood?"

"Understood."

"Seems like using a sledge hammer to catch a fly, but—"

"It's better than have him sure there's no escape and lose many men getting him with the bayonet."

"The moon will rise at three o'clock. We'll start then."

CHAPTER VI

MORNING

THE MORNING wind blew the mists from the ground. The trees and bushes stood out, with their green, varnished leaves. Martier saw the tall brinks of the ravine loom more and more precisely. He distinguished at last the cleft through which Hartmann must pass.

Several groups had been permitted to go by unmolested at Gerval's indication. The Legionnaires had taken shelter in the high grass, and waited, weapons ready. They knew, well enough, that it was Hartmann they were after.

Gerval brought out his watch.

"Hartmann received the information an hour ago—and should be along at any time. Whether alone or accompanied, I wish to arrest him myself to avoid further loss of life. You have a written order to do exactly as I say."

"A written order, yes."

"You may remain in concealment with your men."

"Understood," Martier agreed.

He returned to his former station, sat down and waited.

Within a few minutes a group of three men appeared, two afoot, the third mounted on a donkey. Martier recognized him instantly, despite the voluminous swathing of native garments. Gerval looked toward Martier and nodded. Then he emerged from cover. Quietly, evenly, he walked toward the deserter.

At sight of his uniform, the two natives escorting Hartmann, presuming with reason that the officer was not alone, fled back into the ravine. Hartmann tried to turn around but a shot from Gerval's pistol dropped the donkey.

The Russian scrambled to his feet and came forward, hobbling laboriously. He was grotesque, resembled an ape. The turban and the cloak could not conceal his infirmity. He bobbed and squirmed until within four feet of Gerval.

Gerval spoke and Hartmann listened. In the end Hartmann seemed to nod understanding. The next moment the deserter had seized the lieutenant's pistol and Gerval fell. Hartmann tossed the pistol away.

"Ready, Lieutenant!" he called out.

It was Sutari who protected Hartmann from the men. The Corsican had undoubtedly guessed something of the truth.

Martier bent briefly over Gerval, lifted him by the shoulder. The eyes were closed, the face very calm. Gerval, at several months' interval, had picked up his duty and insisted upon dying to perform it.

"Fall back," Martier ordered.

He addressed Hartmann—"You did what Gerval asked, didn't you?"

"Surely. After all, he deserved it. He sent one of his emissaries to me telling me the path would be free until nine this morning. But I do not blame him greatly.

He was always queer and couldn't help being different—"

"Sutari," Martier ordered, "select six non-coms."

There was a short delay, for Sutari dutifully went through the formality of preparing a blank cartridge to insert in one of the rifles. These would be handed at random to the men composing the squad.

Hartmann eyed the men as they lined up.

"By the way, I apologize for the vile terms I used, Lieutenant. They were addressed less to you than to those under you, who are not very subtle and attach importance to insults. Will you let me have a cigaret?"

"All right, Hartmann."

"Rather meager squad," Hartmann commented, smoking placidly. "I am entitled to twelve." He looked up, saw vultures circling high above. "Instinct, Lieutenant! And some persons pride themselves on having the gift of prophecy when vulgar birds use it to find food. Well, Martier, you can always say you beheld the finish of a man who was not ordinary—not ordinary at all. A case—Corporal Hartmann! Well, Gunther, I'm ready."

"Take the lieutenant's body aside," Martier ordered.

"Yes. It's better than my moving. I've limped my last. Goodby, all of you."

The six men of the firing squad were aligned. Without consulting one another, each, with one movement, slid back the breech of his rifle. The man who had the blank cartridge replaced it with a bullet.

Hartmann smiled.

He was still smiling when Gunther brought his arm down sharply. The deserter fell. But, as he had boasted, he was not an ordinary man. All six missiles had struck his chest—and Hartmann, with a last flicker of savage energy, stood straight, with a single surge, smiled, and fell a last time.

Gunther stepped forward, fired his pistol into the man's ear.

For five seconds every one stood in place, motionless, with the same dread seeping into each brain. Hartmann, the unbeatable, might rise again.

Then Martier, with the toe of his boot, crushed the cigaret stub dropped by Hartmann.

A Tale of the Hillbillies

HILL MAGIC

By FISWOODE TARLETON

EVENING on Meddlesome Creek. Long, mountain evening. Sometimes one of the Fallons shifted his position under the sycamores. Sometimes Ked, sometimes his maw, moved into the pale light thrown out the open doorway by the smoking, fitful fat pine. Sometimes the shucks rustled from within the cabin as Ked's sister, Nebraska, moved and rolled over in the old cherry bedstead. Sometimes the notes of a whippoorwill drifted down from the laurel cover along the creekbed road. And now and then the wavering voice of a hound, a full throated melodious baying, rolled down, entering Ked's ears like a music, singing in his blood.

Ked Fallon could sit all night long and listen to his Walker dog. His mind's eyes pictured the blooded hunter with his nose close to the ground, clinging to the scent, unmindful of fox tricks; game dog never surrendering until sore paws pulled him down at dawn in some cool, lonely cove. Ked could tell by the bayings where his Walker dog was from

minute to minute. Then suddenly, like an intrusion, came the choppy, harsh, unmusical notes of a dog of uncertain breed—a mountain potlicker dog following the Walker. Again, this time with frowns and tightening of muscles, Ked's mind's eyes saw both dogs; they saw a ridge with the blooded dog leading the potlicker, the Walker showing the other the way. A zig-zag course through the laurel sometimes. Sometimes straight up and down the ridge, or an abrupt turning into a cove where the bayings were muffled. Vivid pictures made by Ked's mind's eyes always showed him the trailing of the potlicker after the Walker, the dogs at the top of the ridge, the fox at the bottom, the prey always a ridge depth ahead. The nondescript, untrained dog more than once bayed close to the hind legs of Ked's dog, bayed without smelling for himself.

"Lowdown, shif'less, lazy dog," Ked said to himself.

The choppy notes had spoiled the melody and Ked again shifted his position, spat in disgust.

He looked into the cabin and saw Nebraska move on the bed again. He heard the breathings of his maw as she dozed with her back against the cabin wall. The gentle mountain wind stirred the hanks of wool, swung them on the rafters. The seed corn and "burny peppers" moved also in the wind. The corners of newspapers plastered to the cabin wall inside flapped at times.

Moths flew into the cabin after beating about the door; moths hungry for light flew into the flame of the fat pine; perished through an ecstasy.

"Crazy things," said Ked to himself. "Crazy things that can't see death in fire."

He wondered much over this, and wondering over it brought his mind to the ambush laid for his pap a few weeks back. When his pap laid his body down in the laurel. One shot from a big bore gun. Death for his pap in the shadows. He could understand that better.

More like the flame that fully warns of death was the trick of the two revenuers who came a few nights before in the tempest-storm, the strangers who ate of his food and accepted his shelter, and then were going to arrest him—would have arrested him but for the chief who grew soft for some reason and let him go.

He had no more sense than the moths when he walked into the trap of the Government men; he ought to have been able to see the trap. Thinking of that stormy evening made Ked frown and tighten his muscles and declare way down in him that he'd never be fooled again.

The experience had made him more watchful. Since that night he seemed to sleep more lightly, waking to the slightest sound in the creekbed road. The shame of his being fooled by outlanders would always remain with him. The fester would never heal.

Ked watched the moths again while his maw dozed. After a while his sister Nebraska sat up on the old cherry bed, rubbed her eyes, rose and stepped to the door, leaned against the frame.

"*Sssssh!*" said Ked.

He had heard a faint sound from down creek, a faint splash. He saw that his maw had awakened. Nebraska stepped down into the shadows.

They all heard footfalls in the creekbed road, and pretty soon several forms moved into the pale light thrown down the slope to the waters.

A call came.

"Hit's yore cousin Ezry an' them," said his maw.

Five figures came up the short slope, through the shadows into the full light thrown out the doorway.

Ked's uncle, Blake and Carr Fernlot, sat down in the shadows, and were followed by his uncles on his pap's side—Ezra, Noah and Jonah Fallon. The silence closed in, tightened for several minutes, an interlude that was unbroken by the whippoorwills and hounds.

Ezra Fallon spat, adjusted his galuses, leaned over toward Ked. An unlighted lantern squeaked as he set it down.

The gesture meant much to Ked. Since his pap was gone the responsibility was his. A wave of confidence swept over him when his uncle Ezra talked directly at him. It meant that his kin had forgiven the blunder he made with the revenuers, still had faith in the boy of the patriarch who had gone down before an ambush.

"Lem Frye's gal slap-hitted Violet Dawn," said Ezra Fallon.

KED HAD to make a picture, had to see the scene with all its background before he answered. The Frye girl striking the girl of his uncle Ezra was nothing; it was the design behind that deed that was important. Knowing the history of old trouble between the Fryes and his own people Ked could make a quick, vivid picture in his mind of a hate slumbering for more than two years. He remembered two years back when his pap, his uncles and cousins, avenged a wrong. The Fryes had tried to throw guilt on the Fallons by removing their still to the Fallon property, leaving evidence against Ked's people when they knew the Government men were coming.

Vivid to Ked was the morning two years back when his own sister Nebraska stumbled upon the still and carried the warning to her blood. Just after dawn, his uncles and cousins, toting the parts of the still back to the cove of the Fryes, then shooting into their cabin as a lesson, wounding two of them. And Ked's mind's eyes saw the Fryes in the settlement at Pennyroyal every Saturday evening thereafter, with their hard, brittle looks at him and his people. He knew that they were only waiting.

He looked into his Uncle Ezra's eyes, was about to speak when a great light seemed to be thrown over the act of the Frye girl in attacking Violet Dawn Fallon. He recalled the return of two of the Fryes from Federal prison the week before, two of the Frye boys coming home after serving a year's sentence for blockading. The Fryes were reinforced with these two, the two "fightin'est" of all the Fryes. The Fryes were stronger now, and set their girl upon Violet Dawn. They wanted to fan the old spark, wanted to renew war, wanted revenge.

"Burr an' Pamp Frye air back," said Ked, looking at his uncle Ezra. "'At's why theyuns' gal war sot agin Violet Dawn."

Ezra nodded. So did Ked's other uncles, Noah and Jonah Fallon, and Blake and Carr Fernlot.

Ked was right. He had penetrated a secret. He had shown wisdom. He had his pap's hunch about trouble, about designs against the blood.

Nebraska's eyes were opened wide. She stared at each man in turn. Ked's maw rubbed her knees. She handed a mountain clay pipe to Nebraska to take into the cabin and light from the fat pine.

Ked watched Nebraska bend over the light. He saw the smoke of the twist tobacco roll outward, saw his sister return to the shadows and hand the lighted pipe back to her maw. The bowl of the pipe glowed.

From atop the ridge the screech of an owl drifted down, a weird delirium that broke upon the ravine and threw its cover over the melodious baying of the Walker dog. The silence after the screech thickened. Ked could hear the regular breathing of the five men.

"Wal—" said Ezra, rising and stretching.

Ked rose and went into the cabin. He picked up his Winchester gun, threw down the lever, saw that the magazine was full. He closed the lever slowly, almost without sound and came out of the cabin.

The six of them walked down the short slope. By the waters his uncles reached into a laurel thicket and brought out their guns.

Suddenly, as they passed under the sycamores, the light from the cabin lost its grip on them. They became as the boulders and the cucumber trees; swallowed by the blackness of the creekbed road.

Grim men moving through the night as through black waters. Silent men pushing toward their business. Again the baying of the hounds came from the high ridge. The whippoorwills called and moved and called again.

Ked thought of the Fryes. He tried to form in his mind the tactics of his uncle Ezra. He said to himself:

"Uncle Ezra will station us all around the cabin in the cove. Then he'll call to the Fryes. He and the Fryes will talk in the blackness. Talk about the Frye girl slapping Violet Dawn. Maybe ask the Fryes to whip their girl. The Fryes will refuse. They will bar their door . . ."

The six men turned a bend in the creekbed road. Knowing every foot of ground they all walked without sound. They sometimes left the creekbed to walk along its banks, escaping the treacherous sands. Once they passed a cabin whose dim light touched the waters. Sometimes a wild hog grunted under the beech trees.

"Maybe though we'll run into an ambush," said Ked to himself. "If the Fryes planned new trouble they will expect trouble. They wouldn't be in the cabin. They'd be strung around in the shadow pockets. They'd see us against the sky."

He caught up with his uncle Ezra and pulled at his shirt. Automatically all the men stopped.

"Ef they-uns air a-lookin' fer us hit's a-goin' difficult us ter git in thar cove," whispered Ked.

"Hain't a-goin' in thar cove," said Ezra Fallon.

Ked had another inspiration.

"Reckon we-uns keep 'em in the cove. Mow they-uns daown ef they come outten the cove."

"'At's the p'int," said Ezra, and moved on.

Ked, as they made their way around some boulders in the creekbed road, wondered if his uncle Ezra would approach the cove from the branch or from the rim, the edge of the forested cup that lay in the side of the ridge.

AGAIN Ked had a glimpse beneath the surface of the project of his uncles. Began to understand that deep lying reason for his going through the night to bring an enemy to time. The slapping of one child by another had already faded as an issue. It had vanished before the expansion of the bigger thing, the test of power. He knew way down in him that if his people ignored, disregarded the blow struck Violet Dawn, other affronts would come from the Fryes. Finally, unless his kin retaliated, the Fryes would try something else. Ked had a brief, depressing vision of himself and all his kin being chased over the big mountain. His hand closed tightly on the butt of his Winchester gun. His determination affected his step. He came down hard on a rock that turned under his foot, made him stumble.

"*Sssssssh!*" said his uncle Noah.

They all stopped suddenly.

From down the creekbed road came a faint splashing. A mule moving down the waters. Sometimes the shoes of the beast struck the rocks. The sound flushed a whippoorwill that whipped the wind as it flew overhead.

The Fallons withdrew into the laurel, crouched and waited. The splashing of the traveler's mule grew louder. When the water sprayed the faces of the six hillmen, Ezra Fallon rose and called.

"Who mought you-un be?" said Ezra Fallon.

"The God-truth is, my name air Merty O'Boyle, this hyar air my mule-critter, an' I got me up a hunner teeth in this hyar poke."

"Meanin' you-un air a tooth-dentist," said Ezra to the traveler, who was invisible in the thick shadows.

"Nothin' else," said the traveler. "I hain't bound fer nowhar special. "Ef a feller's rottened by a tooth I got me a contrapshun that yanks hit outten his haid an' no foolin'."

"I heard on him," said Ked's uncle Blake Fernlot.

"Hain't ary trouble in the old world

cain't be sot agin a bad tooth," said the traveler.

Ezra Fallon lighted the lantern. The flame threw a soft glow around. The traveler, a gaunt hillman, scratched his chin and blinked for a minute. The beast stood still, hanging his head, closing his eyes, dreaming his strange beast dreams.

Ked, stepping through the laurel with his uncles, stood in the creekbed, and looked over the traveler. Saddlebags, a gunny sack thrown back of the saddle, and the tooth-dentist's long legs covered the mule from neck to rump. Something moved in the sack, struggled and squealed.

"A billy up the branch hed a tooth 'at hellamighty kicked in his jaw. When I yanked hit out he-un gratituded me with a shoat."

The traveler pulled a small bag from the pocket of his jean pants.

"Teeth," he said, shaking it so that the contents rattled faintly. "Over a hunner teeth."

"Godamighty," said Ezra Fallon, reaching over to feel of the sack.

The tooth-dentist unwound the string on the sack, felt around and pulled out a molar. He slid off his mule and held the tooth down well in the light of the lantern.

Ked bent over with his uncles, watched the tooth-dentist roll the tooth around in his palm, saw that its roots were large and black.

"Reckon yuh heerd on Burr Catley?"

All the Fallons nodded.

A quick, sharp picture came to Ked. Burr Catley, a killer of men, hater of the Government at Washington; Burr who hid out for six months with his kin, defying posses of county officers and Federals; Burr who inspired many a ballad with his exploits, and went down only when surrounded by State troops that raked his body with machine gun fire.

"This hyar air Burr's ol' chawer," said the tooth-dentist.

"Geeamighty!" said Ezra, taking the tooth with his fingers, then passing it around.

"How you-un git hit?" asked Noah Fallon.

"Wal, thisaway. I war a-goin' daown crick one time an' heerd a call from the bresh. 'Whar you-un bound fer this mawnin'?' said a face starin' at me over the bresh. 'An' who air yuh?'

" 'Fer a fac' I'm a tooth-dentist,' I said.

" 'You hain't seed a billy anywhar with a pock face air you?'

"I thought on hit an' got creeps. I hed jes' jerked a tooth outten 'a feller's haid with such a markin'. Yanked hit in a laurely place with his gun agin my belly. 'At pock marked feller was shore narvous.

" 'No, I hain't seed sech a feller,' I said, afeared o' gittin' tangled in some war.

" 'Wal,' said Burr Catley, 'effen you-un air sure enough a tooth-dentist, I reckon you orter come in this hyar kiver an' look at my jaw. I got me a bad tooth an' she kicks like a mule-critter.'

"Ol' tooth shore stuck in Burr's mouth-gums. When I got her out Burr jes' giv a leetle shake ter his haid. 'Whew,' he said, 'she shore feels good. What you axing me fer yanking' the ol' kicker?'

"'Ef you allow me the tooth we'll call her square'," I said.

"Then a funny thing. Burr jes' walked off, a-steppin' slow, like he giv' up the killin' idea. Ol' tooth riled Burr fer maybe ten year. Course he done his devilment afore I saw he-un. Otherwise an' tharfore a bad tooth miseries a man kase the devil sets in hit. Burr orter hed 'at tooth lifted ten year ago."

Ked watched the dentist put the molar back into the sack, then suddenly dump the whole contents out in his palm.

"See 'at pinted tooth thar long as a picket?"

The men nodded. Ked picked it out and passed it round. They all felt of the sharp point. The tooth-dentist sat down on the creek bank. They all sat down. Ezra Fallon rested the lantern on his knee.

"ALL TROUBLE on this earth air kase o' bad teeth. The devil's in a tooth; hit rottens a man's body an' soul. Hit'll set a billy crazy. 'At pinted tooth kin instance hit! I yanked 'at tooth from the looniest feller you ever seed. Used ter plow his pap's corn field in circles, an' go out evenin's, sot on a hill and preach ter the white oaks. Multitude he called 'em. Wanted twelve trees fer disciples, an' cut daown a whole hillside o' timber ter leave twelve. But he cain't count rightly an' left 'leven.

" 'Bet you a dollar trouble's bad tooth,' I said ter his pap.

"Wal, he war so crazysimple he thought we-uns war agoin' cut out his tongue so he couldn't preach. His pap an' four brothers sot on him while I looked at his jaws. When I seed 'at tooth I yanked her, quick, with these hyar forcips . . ."

Ked saw the light bounce from the forceps as they appeared in the free hand of the tooth-dentist.

"Boy's pap said, 'Now you-un go an' plow afore hit rains, kase I think a tempest-storm's a-comin.'

"We watched the boy git the mule, drive up the hill, an' I'm a-tellin' you I hain't never see no furrow no time no straighter nowhar than 'at billy's. Hit war purty ter see. His pap giv' me two shoats, an' two-bit's he'd hed fer twenty year.

"'At's the pock faced billy's tooth right thar," added the tooth-dentist, pointing with his finger.

Carr Fernlot picked out the tooth, stared at it, then passed it around for inspection. The tooth was hollow and held a shadow. They had to hold it directly under the light to see into it.

"Reckon you-un got a revenuer's tooth," said Blake Fernlot.

"Shore I got me up a revenuer's tooth."

The tooth-dentist stirred the pile of teeth with his finger and picked out a square one with broken roots. He handed it to Jonah Fallon.

"One time a-goin' up the Duckhead Crick I seed a feller a-ridin' a hoss an' a-holdin' his jaw. He war yaller as a gourd dipper. Knowed he was a low-lander an' jes' rid up an' said, 'Stranger, you hev' the looks o' bein' right smart oneasied over somethin'."

" 'Oneasied hell,' he said. 'Oneasied hain't a name fer what's kep' me awake fer two nights an' lost me in these hyar hills. I got a tooth that jes' naturally's a-goin' drive me loco. Reckon thar hain't a dentist nearer than twenty mile.'

" 'Reckon thar's a tooth-dentist twenty inches from you-un,' I said.

" 'You a tooth-dentist?' he said.

"I showed him my forcips an' these hyar teeth.

" 'Wal, fer Gawd's sake pull this hyar tooth an' I'll give you five dollars.'

"He opened his mouth. I looked at the swellin' an' my eyes drapped. Seed a Gov'ment badge unner his coat.

" 'I'm afeared I cain't pull hit,' I said.

" 'Why cain't yuh?' he-un said.

" 'Kase I hain't a-pullin' a Federal's tooth an' hevin' him feel so good he's naturally gwine keep snoopin' fer blockaders roun' hyar.'

" 'Ef 'at's all 'at's a-troublin' you I'm a-wantin' ter git outten these ongawdly hills,' he said.

" 'Wal,' I said, 'you-un give me the pistol-gun you got an' five dollars.'

"Shore 'nuff he did an' I yanked his tooth. An' sot him straight fer the settlement. All trouble in thus hyar world's kase o' bad teeth. Take a kickin', mean mule-critter. Hunner ter one he's got a tooth a-hellin' him. Thar was a mule, big white mule up thar along Duckhead one time. Couldn't shoe him lessen he was hawg tied with chains; rope war no good. Wal, thar's his tooth, the big one. As I was a-sayin' he war the meanest critter ever lived. Kilt two billies. Bruk legs an' haids ever'whar. The entire settlement hed him hawg tied when I come up.

" 'Sence you-uns got 'at critter whar he cain't holp hisself,' I said, 'hit hain't

a-hurtin' nothin' ter look at his chawers.'

"Four billies held his haid whilst I had a look-see. I was right. An' the mule-critter was gentled at onct. Ever see a hound drag hisself an' whine? Jes' look—"

"*Sssssh!*" said Ezra Fallon.

Ked, listening, heard splashings up-creek and the quick taps of a mule's shoes on the rocks of the creekbed road.

"'At billy's hell bent fer his destination," whispered Ezra Fallon to the tooth-dentist. "The law must be arter he-un."

The hoof beats rang in the narrow ravine, grew louder, were thrown back by the crags. The mule and rider swung around a bend, appeared suddenly as a great segment of shadow. A hillman under a big, wide brimmed hat was lashing the beast with long reins. The stiff, rocking motion of the mule threw the rider clear at intervals.

Leaning away back, the hillman drew in his mule, blinked from the light or the lantern.

"You-uns seed a tooth-dentist a-comin' daown this hyar crick?" said the rider.

"Hyar he air," said the tooth-dentist. "What air the why-for?"

"Wal, I been a-trailin' you-un fer two, three hours, clar from Duckhead. My jaw's a-hellin' me fer sartin."

"Ef you git offen 'at critter I kin shore on-hell hit."

KED WATCHED the hillman from the Duckhead slide off the mule, stand before the dentist, and open his mouth. The swollen jaw would hardly admit the forceps from which the light glanced as the tooth-dentist worked.

The tooth-dentist held up the tooth so that all might see.

"Hit's enough ter sot you agin yore own pap!"

Ked's eyes were caught by a movement in a trail mouth and turned to see Rufe Lugate, his woman and nine children step out on the creekbed road, and advance slowly into the light. The woman held her least one at her breast. The man pulled at his chin. The children stood in a tight group, their mouths open in wonderment, their eyes big.

Rufe Lugate pushed one of his boys forward to the tooth-dentist.

"Ho-ho!" said the tooth-dentist, looking in the boy's mouth. "Jes' in time, fer a fac', jes' in time. Geeamighty! This hyar childer 'bout pizened from tooth."

The boy's tooth came out. His brothers and sisters gathered close to look at it in turn. Rufe Lugate handed the tooth-dentist a two-bit piece.

People kept coming. Families came up the creekbed road on mules, or appeared suddenly in trail mouths. Ked Fallon watched the crowd swell. All the people from his district seemed to be there. Then those from the outlying coves he seldom saw. And at last the lone inhabitants of far flung coves and branches, faces he hadn't seen for years. Mountain boys dressed only in a shirt and girls in a one piece calico dress stared at the scene with shy eyes. He thought of the mountain telegraph, that strangely swift line of communication that informs in the hills. News carried by neighbor to neighbor.

Suddenly, a figure sprang into the light, stood before the tooth-dentist.

"Hustle!" said the newcomer.

Ked recognized Parr Foxgame, who was wanted by the sheriff because of a cutting in Pennyroyal settlement six months before. Parr hidden out by his kin for half a year, driven by pain to risk arrest.

The operation was quick, Parr springing into the laurel when his tooth was pulled. The tooth-dentist held a short barreled mail order house revolver in his hand—his payment for service.

"Huh, ary o' you billies want her fer four-bits?"

Blake Fernlot traded, snapped the trigger of the revolver two or three times and put the weapon into his pocket.

A hillman rode a mule slowly out of a trail mouth and into the creekbed road.

"I got me up a bad tooth. Hit tee-totally ruins my piety."

"Wal, git offen the mule-critter," said the tooth-dentist.

"Cain't git offen this hyar critter. Leg jints air stiff."

"Huh, then I'll git up to ye."

The tooth-dentist climbed atop a boulder on the edge of the creekbed road, and was soon looking down into the open mouth of the hillman on the mule. Ezra Fallon held the lantern high. The people moved up, tightened into a group.

Once more the light flashed from the forceps. Once more a tooth was held up so that all might see. The tooth-dentist pocketed his money-piece. Got down from the boulder, sought his mule that was cropping the low foliage in the shadows. Pretty soon he rode into the light, sat his mule, and glanced around from face to face. He yawned at last, looked up at the sky. Yawned again.

"Ary more o' you-uns rottened by a tooth?"

Hopeful faces looked at one another. Ears seemed to be listening for hoofbeats coming down the creekbed road. Everything was still.

Ked felt the stillness. It was heavy, and prolonged until it became a great emptiness, and the emptiness seemed to enter his blood. His whole being felt a void. He hoped strongly for another man or woman or child to come; one more sufferer to fill the void. He opened his mouth, mountain fashion, and strained his ears to hear a faint, distant hoofbeat or footfall. He suddenly wished his potlicker hound would emerge from the shadows. Maybe the no account dog had tooth trouble, he thought. Maybe it wasn't feet but teeth that made the potlicker quit the job so soon, give up and lie down.

He saw that the people, though silent and unmoving, lingered also with a hope, watching the tooth-dentist, throwing glances around at the shadows as if they might hold a lure to stop the tooth-dentist as he stretched and bent over the head of his dreaming mule, ready to start down the creekbed road.

Ked saw some hill people whispering, saw several hillmen advance toward the tooth-dentist, trying to gain on each other. The Fallon boy knew, he understood, and reached the tooth-dentist in two long steps.

"Right smart glad ter hev ye stop with we-uns," he said. "A hull bed to yoreself. Hain't arybody but maw an' Nebrasky an' me. Right smart glad ef you stop with we-uns."

The tooth-dentist spat.

"Right smart glad ter stop with you-uns."

Ked glanced at his uncles who nodded approvingly. They began to search around in the brush for the guns. The barrels gleamed; the light from the lantern bounced from them as Ked's uncles hauled them out from the cover and made a group around the tooth-dentist. Ked, receiving his rifle from his uncle Noah, made a scooping motion with it. The tooth-dentist dug his heels into the flank of the dreaming mule that stepped out slowly.

The least of the Fallons, turning to look back, saw the dimmed figures in the creekbed road. Some were mounting mules. Some were entering the trails that led over the big mountain. Some were being swallowed by the shadows as they started upcreek. Some followed the Fallons and the tooth-dentist at a distance as they plodded home.

From atop his mule the tooth-dentist looked down at the hillmen that surrounded him.

"You-uns look like the milishy. What air the why-for o' them rifle-guns?"

Ked and his uncles stopped. They scratched their heads and pulled at their chins and looked at each other. Ked thought of the Fryes, made a mind picture of the Fryes back there in the deep shadows, the blood enemies who were afraid to come out for the "pulling."

A wild hog grunted and blasted the earth under the darkened beech trees above the waters.

"Onct I pulled a boarhog's tushes," said the tooth-dentist.

"Geeamighty," said Ked, "how you-un

do hit?"

"Wal, I air thirsted. Fer a fact I'm dry-parched. Ef you-uns kin likker me I'll tell ye the how."

Once more Ked made a scooping motion with his rifle. The tooth-dentist started the mule. The Fernlots and the Fallons surrounded the dreamy beast and its burden. The gun barrels flashed a defiance, the lantern moved like an eye, the figures threw close shadows, moving down the creekbed road.

ISLAND *of* DOGS

By LAWRENCE G. GREEN

WE WERE steaming northward between the East African coast and Madagascar. Dark against a pink skyline at dawn, I saw through my binoculars the outline of a ship.

No smoke came from her funnel, no white wave broke about her bows. She did not lift to the long Indian Ocean swell. When full daylight came I realized that she was a wreck, fast on the coral reefs of little Juan de Nova Island.

Juan de Nova is the island of dogs. There have been others—one in the Bosphorus where all the hungry, scavenging dogs of Constantinople were marooned and left to starve. But on lonely, tropical Juan de Nova the dogs feed royally and rule the island.

In the old days of sail, bluff bowed East Indiamen, Portuguese barks, and pirates of all nations used to call at Juan de Nova for fresh water, fruit and turtles. Dogs of every breed, some from Europe, others from China, escaped on shore and were left behind. Today their descendants form the strangest, wildest mongrel horde in the world.

The dogs have the island to themselves. When a French steamer sent a boat's crew on shore for water a few years ago the men were attacked with such reckless ferocity that they had to return for firearms before they could fill their casks.

Naturalists have noted two queer facts about the dogs of Juan de Nova—they droop their tails like wolves, and they have lost their barks. On moonlight nights they may be heard calling wildly to each other; but when they returned to savagery they lost the bark of the ordinary dog.

Hunting in packs, the dogs seem to have divided the island to their own satisfaction. One pack never invades the territory of another pack. They scratch in the sandy beaches for turtles' eggs, eat the turtles that crawl out of the sea occasionally, and stalk sea birds with the skill of jungle beasts. No one who has seen the dogs of Juan de Nova doubts that our household pets had their origin in the wild. These dogs are as fierce as any Siberian wolf.

For years now they have remained unmolested in their island kingdom, among the coconut palms and bananas and mangoes. The island is a horseshoe of coral, and there was a time when the pirates used to careen their wooden ships within its shelter. The modern inhabitants of Juan de Nova are almost as dangerous as the buccaneers of last century.

The FOUR MARKED MEN

By ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

A Novelette of Chinatown

QUONG TSUE stepped from the gloom of Ferguson Alley and turned north on Los Angeles. The street was dark, quiet, deserted. Wide iron gates, marking the portals of shops, were closed for the night. The brick façades and jutting balconies gave few voices and fewer lights. A Southern Pacific mail train came pounding by, an obtrusive monster piercing Chinatown's placid heart, leaving it again dark, quiet, seemingly deserted.

Quong Tsue, bearing what appeared to be a traveling man's sample case, stopped before a white globe lighting an entrance. On the globe was lettered: "Charlie Fun—Rooms."

Here the door was open. A dim light shone from what passed as a lobby of a hotel for Chinese transients. Sample case in hand, Quong Tsue entered. The one occupant of the lobby was its host, Charlie Fun.

Quong Tsue was a stranger to Charlie Fun. He produced from a handsome leather wallet a printed business card and extended it to Fun—

QUONG TSUE

CHINESE HERBS AND REMEDIES SAN FRANCISCO

The visitor was, by his bearing and dress, a guest of quality. He wore a loose black suiting adorned with pearl buttons. His hat was a finely woven Panama with the brim turned up all around. When he removed it he exposed the braid of his hair coiled tightly about his pate. His lips were thin, stern. He was one eyed. The good eye was the right. His skin was as yellow and as smooth as shellac. His air was haughty, leaving no doubt that he considered himself of higher caste than Charlie Fun.

Fun bowed.

"Every corner of my wretched house," he said in good English, "is at your service."

Fun was a shorn Chinaman. He was fat faced, loose shirted and wore horn rimmed spectacles.

"I desire to occupy the least wretched of your rooms," answered Quong Tsue in Chinese.

His tone was a rebuke to Fun for using English. Fun thereafter spoke in Chinese, although his diction was far less scholarly than Quong Tsue's.

Taking up the sample case, Charlie Fun led Quong Tsue down a dim, odorous corridor to the rear room on the right. Its door, like all the other doors of the corridor, was unvarnished, shabby. But when Fun opened the door its interior side was seen to be of ornate teak wood. Shoulder high in the door was a square hole equipped with a teakwood gate inlaid with mother of pearl. The obvious purpose of the square hole was to enable an occupant to appraise a caller before unbolting the main door.

Charlie Fun snapped on a fly specked light bulb. The room was seen to be about fifteen feet square and floored with an Oriental rug, once costly but now badly worn and burned here and there by cigarets. There was a table and a high backed wicker chair. There was a mantel supporting the rusty image of a dragon. On one side of the dragon was a tall vase, or jar. On the other side was a candle in an ivory stick. There was a very narrow and very high bed piled with multi-colored, moth eaten pillows. There was one window, tightly draped.

"This is the least wretched of my habitations," explained Charlie Fun.

"It is indeed wretched," said Quong Tsue, "but I shall inhabit it for a month whilst I pursue business which has brought me to Los Angeles."

He astounded Charlie Fun by handing him a fifty dollar bill. He dismissed Fun. When he was alone he bolted the door. He also bolted the teakwood gate of the shoulder high square hole.

Quong Tsue then limped across the room. Limping gave him relief. The truth was that Quong Tsue usually walked with a cane. By Spartan effort he had arrived at the house of Charlie Fun without limping and without a cane.

Limping to the window at the rear of the room, Quong Tsue drew aside its heavy drape. He observed that the window was locked. Through it he could see a dingy Chinatown alley. Just across the alley at the back door of a restaurant was a bin piled high with tin cans.

After a moment's reflection, Quong Tsue unlocked the window. He did so because he knew that at any moment he might need to make a speedy and surreptitious exit from the room. He closed the hanging drapes. He then made certain that there was no other peep hole into the room.

When he was quite sure of his seclusion, Quong Tsue opened his left eye. His left eye was fully as competent as his right. The opening of the left eye had the effect of widening the right.

When Quong Tsue now released a slight indrawing of his lips his entire expression became markedly altered. His lips, far from being straight and thin, were curved and thick.

Because of its uncomfortable weight and warmth, he next removed the braid of hair coiled on his head. He laid it aside. The dome now exposed was as bald as a billiard ball. Although his skin was still as yellow and as smooth as shellac, Quong Tsue was fast losing the aspect of a Chinese.

It was a rôle he had never used until tonight. In it only Charlie Fun had seen him at close range. Fun wore thick lens glasses, indicating a not too perfect vision.

Had he fooled Fun?

Yes, thought Quong Tsue, Fun was probably deceived due to the dialogue in Chinese. As a matter of fact Quong Tsue was a Caucasian born in Shanghai; he had lived constantly in Shanghai until the twenty-fifth year of his life.

And now to work.

Quong Tsue seated himself comfortably in the high backed wicker chair. He opened his sample case and brought forth four stamped and addressed envelops. He also produced four business cards similar to the one he had given Charlie Fun in lieu of registering in the office. On the back of each of these four cards was typed a brief message.

Quong Tsue also brought forth various papers and memoranda and arranged them on the table.

He was about to unleash a thunderbolt of crime, or chain of crimes, destined to rock the West Coast like a volcanic quake. Before unleashing it, Quong Tsue paused a moment to school himself in its artful machinations, and to peruse again his memoranda of preparation.

Here, first of all, were the names and occupations of four reputedly rich Angelenos:

Captain Oliver Cotton, president Pacific Lanes Steamship Company; Paul Seldom, retired capitalist; Thomas Julian, realtor; Joshua Ackerson, president Ackerson Aeromotor Corporation.

Quong Tsue studied the four names thoughtfully. He knew the outstanding characteristic of each man. With a pencil he now wrote an adjective after each name.

After Cotton's he wrote "hard".

After Seldom's he wrote "easy".

After Julian's he wrote "cowardly".

After Ackerson's he wrote "stubborn".

He picked up the first of four cards. On its back was a message illustrated with a rude pen and ink sketch:

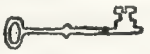
Oliver Cotton:
You are Number One.

—QUONG TSUE.

Quong Tsue placed this card in the stamped envelop addressed to Captain Oliver Cotton at his suite in the Cotton Lines Building, Los Angeles. He sealed the envelope.

The message on the second card was—

Paul Seldom:
You are Number Two.



—QUONG TSUE.

Quong Tsue placed that one in the envelop addressed to Seldom, sealing it.

The message on the third card was—

Thomas Julian:
You are Number Three.

—QUONG TSUE.

The message on the fourth card was—

Joshua Ackerson:
You are Number Four.

—QUONG TSUE.

When Quong Tsue had the proper enclosure in each envelop, and when he had sealed all four envelops, he placed them for the moment in a side pocket of his pearl button coat.

He looked over his remaining memoranda of preparation.

Here was a receipt showing that he had rented, for two months paid in advance, a cabin in a small cañon off Verdugo Road, in the Verdugo Hills, hardly four miles from the city limits of Los Angeles.

Here was another receipt showing that he had also rented, for two months paid in advance, a cylindrical edifice on the

beach near Oxnard. It was an old powder magazine. It had been built by a contractor who no longer needed it for the purpose. Quong Tsue, calling himself a market fisherman, had ostensibly rented it to store nets.

In neither rental transaction had he used the name Quong Tsue.

He was now reminded by another memorandum that he had started a small checking account in a San Francisco bank under the name of Richmond. The present balance of the account was $113.65.

Another item of his notes reminded him that he had done a little trading under the name Richmond with a certain Frisco stock broker.

A last item of his memoranda was a pasteboard parcel check issued by the check stand of the Los Angeles Santa Fé depot. Quong Tsue had obtained it by checking a worthless bag there and deliberately failing to call for it. On the check was the number 542. Originally it had been 245. Quong Tsue had ten small rubber dyes with which he could print, or stamp, the figures 0 to 9 in the exact height and type of the figures on this standard Santa Fé depot check stand parcel check. The check in hand had been taken out merely to practise on, against a sterner emergency far ahead along Quong Tsue's schedule of crime.

Now that he was ready overtly to launch this schedule, Quong Tsue elected to destroy his several memoranda of preparation. He gathered them up, arose, limped to the mantel. He lighted the candle. One by one he burned his notations, allowing the ashes to sift into the tall Chinese jar. He made certain that not a fragment remained.

He then recoiled the braid of hair about his bald head. He compressed his lips to a thin straight line. He closed his left eye. He went to the door and unbolted the teakwood gate of the shoulder high square hole. By the bedside was a bell by which a guest might summon service from Charlie Fun. Quong Tsue pressed the bell's button, limped to the table and sat facing the door.

He heard Charlie Fun padding down the corridor.

In a moment the square teakwood gate was pushed open. Framed in the opening Quong Tsue saw the round visage of Charlie Fun.

"The master has called?" inquired Fun in Chinese.

"It is my desire," informed Quong Tsue with a tone of arrogance, "that you proceed without loitering to nearest mail box and mail four letters." Quong Tsue spoke, as before, in Chinese.

He arose and without the faintest suggestion of a limp moved to the door. He took from his pocket the four stamped envelops addressed to Cotton, Seldom, Julian and Ackerson. He handed them through the square hole to Charlie Fun.

"When you have mailed them," he added, "you may bring me a pot of tea."

"These insignificant service are already performed," said Fun politely, and withdrew.

Quong Tsue sat down and waited calmly for fifteen minutes.

He kept his left eye closed and his lips compressed. He sat like an ivory image facing the now open teakwood gate in the door. He knew that if Fun was suspicious he would contrive to spy. Quong Tsue rather hoped that he would.

He failed to hear the approach of Fun. Fun's Mongolian face merely appeared, of a sudden, framed in the square hole.

"I have mailed the master's letters," announced Fun.

He extended a steaming pot on a tray through the hole.

Without limping Quong Tsue went forward, took the tea, dismissed Fun.

He quaffed the tea with small relish. He then locked his sample case which, now that he had destroyed certain notes and memoranda, contained nothing but a change of clothing similar to the garments worn at present by Quong Tsue.

He donned his Panama hat and unbolted the corridor door. He took the key from the inside and placed it in the keyhole from the outside, stepped into the corridor, closed the door, locked it. Re-

taining the key, he walked without limping up the corridor, passed Charlie Fun in the front office without speaking to him and stepped out on the dark street walk.

Somewhere a steeple clock struck the hour of eleven.

Quong Tsue walked south to Ferguson Alley, east through the alley to Alameda, south on Alameda to Temple, turning sharply anon to see if Charlie Fun might be trailing him. There was no evidence that Fun followed.

Near Alameda and Temple was a parked Ford coupé. By the time Quong Tsue reached it he was in the direst pain, as though a spike were driven through his knee cap. The strain of not limping was the severest travail of his plot.

He entered the coupé and drove along Temple to North Broadway. Via North Broadway, San Fernando and Verdugo Roads he drove a dozen miles to the Verdugo Hills. There he turned into a small side cañon and parked under a live oak beside an unlighted cabin.

Quong Tsue entered the cabin. When he emerged half an hour later he did not in the least resemble Quong Tsue.

He embarked again in the Ford coupé.

He drove into Glendale, turning west on Los Feliz. For tonight he was through. Tomorrow night he must work again. Swiftly and in order he must assault four marked men.

Cotton—Seldom—Julian—Ackerson!

A bullet—a key—an anchor—a wheel!

It was after midnight now. The schemer drove on through Glendale and Hollywood to his own mansion in Beverly Hills. It was the mansion of Paul Seldom.

For Quong Tsue was Paul Seldom, second on the list of his own victims, No. 2 of four marked men.

"ANY MAIL of importance?" inquired Paul Seldom of his secretary at eleven-thirty the next morning.

He was in his downtown office. The office was only a two-room suite, since Seldom was no longer active in business. All he needed was a convenient place to receive and answer mail.

The secretary, a severe spinster by the name of Stimson, was his only employee.

"There's just one item," she answered, "that I can not take take care of myself. It puzzles me, Mr. Seldom."

She handed to Paul Seldom a business card on one side of which was printed a name, an occupation and an address. The address was vague—San Francisco. The name was Quong Tsue.

Seldom read aloud:

"Paul Seldom: You are Number Two.
—QUONG TSUE."

There was a sketch of a key on the card.

"This," he suggested annoyedly to Miss Stimson, "must be the freak publicity stunt of some Chinese salesman. Gate crashing in these days is a fine art. They'll do anything to break in. If this Chong Chu, or whatever he calls himself, shows up, please tell him I'm not interested in anything he has to say or sell."

Miss Stimson withdrew to the front office.

When he was alone Paul Seldom placed the card in his vest pocket and gave attention to routine correspondence. He was a large man in his fiftieth year, ruddy, bald, thick lipped and with exceptionally round eyes. The dictum that eyes are open windows of the soul did not hold true in the case of Seldom. In no manner did they confess or expose the bitterness which burned, like a hell's clinker, within his breast. All his life he had been a gambler; his features told no tales.

He puttered with his correspondence for an hour, then arose, took his derby hat and cane, limped out of the office to the elevator.

Fifteen minutes later he appeared at the Angeleno, a downtown club of wealthy patronage where he occasionally took lunch.

Seldom, passing through the lounge where several of the members having

finished lunch, were engaged with cigars and New York papers, went on into the grill. Pausing in the portal of it he looked keenly about. On a far side of the room, at a small side table, he saw Thomas Julian lunching with a guest. In the center of the grill was a huge round table with plates for twelve, and at which there was one vacant seat. Seldom, observing that one of the eleven men lunching at the round table was Joshua Ackerson, limped toward the one vacant chair.

He was greeted, though not fraternally. Paul Seldom was a man who lived within himself and who could claim few intimates. He gave his order and then turned to the man at his left, who chanced to be the Pacific Coast sales manager of American Radio.

"Lockhart," he said casually, "here's a mark for you high pressure salesmen to shoot at. It's a new note in gate crashing—mystery."

He produced Quong Tsue's card from his pocket. The man at his left took it, read both sides of it, grimaced, passed it on. The card went the rounds of the table, finally reaching Joshua Ackerson.

Ackerson had a long face, a stubborn jaw and a high brow. He was known to be enormously rich, a genius, inventor of the Ackerson aeromotor and president of the Ackerson Aeromotor Corporation.

"The devil!" he exclaimed, when he read the Quong Tsue card. "Why, I got one of these infernal things myself, this very morning."

"Got it with you?" inquired Seldom.

"No. I threw it in the waste basket. But I recall the name, Quong Tsue. The message was, 'Joshua Ackerson; you are No. 4.' There followed the sketch of a wheel and the signature."

"Beyond doubt a publicity stunt," was the comment of the sales manager. "Cheap stuff. If a man of mine pulled it, I'd fire him."

"You say there was a wheel drawn on your card?" inquired some one of Ackerson.

"Yes."

"It couldn't be a threat, could it?"

"Hardly. What's threatening about a wheel or a key?"

Paul Seldom glanced covertly toward the two-chair side table where Thomas Julian was dining with a guest. He noticed that Julian had turned alertly toward the big round table. Obviously he had caught a phrase of the conversation.

A moment later Thomas Julian, the millionaire realtor, arose and came over to the round table. He was a slight man with delicate, nervous features.

"Did I hear you mention the name Quong Tsue?" he inquired.

"You got one too, did you, Julian?"

"Yes. It's a relief to know that they've been broadcast all over town. Scared me at first. Thought there might be some—er—personal significance. I had half a mind to turn my card over to the police, but since Ackerson, Seldom and Cap Cotton also—"

"Captain Cotton?" interrupted Seldom. "He got one too?"

"Yes," informed Julian. "I met him in the lounge a few minutes ago and it seems he also got one of these cards."

"Wheel or a key?" inquired Ackerson.

"Neither. Cotton's card is decorated with what appears to be a bullet and mine with an anchor. Cotton is mentioned as No. 1, I as No. 3."

There was a ripple of general comment. Various theories were offered, the most popular one being that the cards merely forecast the calls of a salesman for some Chinese remedy.

"A trick to trap the interest," the radio man insisted, and Paul Seldom professed to agree with him.

"Still," growled Ackerson, "I think I'll get old Cap Cotton's idea on it. He's been in China forty times. Maybe he can translate the riddle."

"He's still out in the lounge," offered Julian.

"Let's all four of us get together, then," suggested Seldom, "and decide whether or not to turn the cards over to the police."

He arose; so did Ackerson. With

Julian they went out in the lounge and found Captain Oliver Cotton.

Cotton was a grim, hard bitten old sea dog. His head was leonine; his hair was a thick shock of gray. His voice was habitually a roar, doubtless trained to such volume in the old days when he had been a shipmaster in the China trade. Seldom knew that he had ridden roughshod over all the obstacles of a stormy life to the top of his calling—he was now owner of his own fleet of freighters and thrice a millionaire.

Thomas Julian was of an opposite type. He was mouse-like, a man who played safe, who never took a chance. Only last night Quong Tsue had written after his name the adjective cowardly.

Ackerson, the mechanical genius, was stubborn. But he was not aggressively stubborn like Cotton. Cotton's stubbornness was the kind that defies and fights. Ackerson's was the kind that merely refuses, then steps aside. Seldom knew that once there had been a labor strike at Ackerson's factory. The strikers' demands were not unreasonable. Yet rather than submit to them, Ackerson had shut down his factory and gone to Europe for a year. Doing so he lost in profits ten times what he would have lost had he accepted the terms of the strikers.

"Captain Cotton," began Julian timidly, "Seldom and Ackerson also received cards like ours, from the mysterious Quong Tsue. What about ringing the police?"

"Rot!" exploded Oliver Cotton contemptuously. "Quong Tsue! Why, you can tell by his card he's nothing but a cheap chink quack. I've ordered my clerks, when he shows up, to pitch him out."

"You're sure he means no mischief?" inquired Seldom.

"What if he does?" roared Captain Cotton. "Leave him to me. I'm No. 1 on his list, ain't I? He'll call on me first and I'll pitch him out on the walk. Ackerson, what about going out to Chevy Chase this afternoon for a round of golf?"

"I happen to be busy today," said Ackerson. "I wouldn't mind shooting a few holes Saturday, though."

"Saturday suits me," agreed Cotton. "Julian, what about you and Seldom joining us for a foursome?"

Julian agreed.

Seldom mentioned that his knee was worse of late and wouldn't stand a hike around a golf course. He returned to his lunch at the round table.

During the afternoon he took occasion to study a map of the Chevy Chase links.

AT DUSK that evening Paul Seldom drove again from his Beverly Hills home to the isolated cabin just off Verdugo Road.

He emerged in the character of Quong Tsue and drove to Chinatown.

Again he found its streets dark, quiet, seemingly deserted.

He entered Charlie Fun's. With his left eye shut he passed Fun in the lobby. He paid no more attention to Fun than he would have paid to a clod. He strode on down the gloomy corridor to the door at the rear right. With the proper key he unlocked the door and entered the room.

His sample case was just as he had left it. There was no evidence of any prying by Charlie Fun. Nor did it make any difference whether Fun had pried or not, since there was nothing in the sample case other than the appropriate belongings of a drummer named Quong Tsue.

Tonight Quong Tsue did not remove the braid coiled about his head. Not for an instant did he open his left eye or release the tight compression of his lips. Now again was his skin as yellow and as smooth as shellac. Not caring whether or not Charlie Fun spied at the teakwood gate in the door, Quong Tsue did not bother to bolt it. He sat down and performed his task of the night.

From a pocket of his pearl button coat he produced a stamped envelop addressed to Captain Oliver Cotton. He also produced a typed letter on a printed letterhead of Quong Tsue's.

The letter read:

Number 1:

You are assessed $100,000.00. At ten tomorrow night, Friday night, you will deliver that sum in 5000 unmarked twenty dollar bills wrapped in brown paper to Charlie Fun at Fun's rooming house on Los Angeles near Ferguson Alley. You will tell Fun to pass it on to his guest, Quong Tsue.

If you do not come, or if you come shadowed by police, or if you attempt any form of evasion or trap, you will be shot.

—QUONG TSUE.

Quong Tsue smiled a malicious one eyed smile as he sealed the message in the envelop addressed to Oliver Cotton. He smiled because he realized the crudity of its apparent purpose. He knew that Captain Cotton would go bellowing to the police and that Charlie Fun's would be immediately raided.

Very well, let them raid. They would not find Quong Tsue. Nor did Quong Tsue have the slightest thought of extorting even a thin dime from Oliver Cotton. He hoped to extort money later from Julian, and still later from Ackerson, but never from Cotton. As for the message, there were only four words in it that counted—the last four: *you will be shot!*

Quong Tsue rang the bell which summoned Fun. Fun came padding down the corridor, peered through the teakwood gate.

"Mail this letter in the nearest post box," directed Quong Tsue, "then bring me a pot of tea." His manner was as mandarin to slave.

The letter was mailed and the tea was served. Later Quong Tsue drove home, via the Verduga cabin, to the house of Paul Seldom in Beverly Hills.

NEXT morning, as usual, Paul Seldom went downtown to his office. Miss Stimson reported that there was no important mail for him.

Seldom spent the next two hours perusing the rental rolls of four apartment houses he owned in the Wilshire district. Perusal of them soured him, for the truth was that those properties were not netting him any income at all.

At noon he lunched at a nearby restaurant.

He had only been back in his office an hour when Miss Stimson announced a caller. The caller proved to be an energetic little redhead by the name of Fred Young, police reporter for the *Times*.

"Hello, Seldom. Heard about the raid on Chinatown?"

Seldom feigned surprise.

"No. What about it?"

Whereupon the reporter proceeded to recite the known facts concerning Quong Tsue.

"A definite threat reached Oliver Cotton in this morning's mail," concluded Fred Young. "Cotton is to fork over a hundred thousand dollars or be shot."

"The devil!" exclaimed Seldom, staring. "Why, dammit, I'm on that chink's list myself. He calls me No. 2."

"Yes, yes, that's why I came to interview you. Any ideas about Quong Tsue?"

"Not the foggiest. What did old Cap Cotton do when he received the threat?"

"He well nigh burst a blood vessel. Maddest man you ever saw. He wanted to call out the Marines and lead a charge on Chinatown."

"He phoned the police, of course?"

"Immediately. In thirty minutes there was a cordon about the entire Chinese quarter. They closed in on Fun's. Fun was there, but no Quong Tsue. In fact, Fun is the only Chinaman in town who will admit having seen Quong Tsue. There's Quong Tsue baggage in a rear room at Fun's all right. Fun shows a business card handed in on arrival, exactly like four cards mailed to four wealthy Americans by Quong Tsue. Charlie Fun admits having mailed the letters at the direction of Quong Tsue. You say you have no ideas?"

"Not the slightest."

"Well, I have." The little reporter, hitching his chair closer, lowered his voice. "You see, when Cotton announced receipt of the threat he mentioned that the threat had been forecast a day in ad-

vance by a card designating him as No. 1. He further announced that Paul Seldom, Tom Julian and Josh Ackerson had been designated as Numbers 2, 3 and 4."

"Well?" prompted Seldom.

"The *Times* told me to drop everything else for Quong Tsue. The first question I asked my brilliant mind was, 'Why are these particular four millionaires chosen by Quong Tsue?' I delved through back files of the *Times* and—*bang!* I stumbled on the motive right off the bat."

"Motive?" gaped Seldom. "I thought the motive is extortion."

"The terms of the extortion seem to me to be too crude to be sincere," shot back Young keenly. "Do you recall the Baja California Exploration swindle of a year ago?"

Seldom jumped. The fish were taking the bait even quicker than he had expected.

"Do I?" he echoed. "Certainly. Those crooks burned me to the tune of fifty thousand dollars."

"Ackerson had some of that phony stock too," went on Young. "So did Julian; so did Cap Cotton. Just who was burned and who got away with the boodle no one knows. The wise guys say that Cap Cotton was back of it all and made a cleaning. You'll remember that the grand jury had him on the carpet. I think you, Julian and Ackerson were also questioned. The point is that all four of your names were mentioned in connection with that scandal."

"I for one was merely a sucker," protested Seldom.

"So say Julian and Ackerson. Cotton roared the inquiry down, although many still believe he made a million with his left hand while his right was losing a few thousand. He was not a director. The directors were dummies and vanished in thin air. What we know is that six million dollars of stock, worth absolutely nothing, was unloaded on the public."

"I was part of the public," insisted Seldom.

"So were about two thousand San Francisco Chinese," announced Young, whacking a fist into palm. "You will recall the general prospectus of the swindle. It claimed to control a vast domain south of Tia Juana, to be reclaimed and colonized. Shifty stock salesmen sifted through Frisco's Chinatown. Their veiled suggestion was that if a Chinese owned a block of the colony stock he could import a kinsman from China to the colony, which, though in Mexico, was to be very, very close to the Border. Gateway from East to West and all that sort of bunk. Anyway, two thousand Frisco Chinks got out the old sock and bought stock in Baja California Exploration."

"Well?" prompted Seldom, trying to appear stupid. This, actually, was the exact line of reasoning he had foreseen and was why he had created Quong Tsue.

"Well, those cheated Chinese stock buyers," pursued Young, "have sent a gunman named Quong Tsue down here to get either their money back or revenge."

"Absurd!" exclaimed Seldom.

"On the contrary, perfectly logical. Four times one is four. Listen. The records show that the total loss of the two thousand Chinese investors was about four hundred thousand dollars. All right. Keep that figure in mind. They selected four rich Angelenos mentioned in the investigation, and whom they believe were profiteering insiders, as targets for extortion. One hundred thousand dollars each. Either that or, in Cotton's case, a bullet. You drew a key, didn't you, Seldom?"

Seldom shrugged, took from his pocket the Quong Tsue card and handed it to Young.

The reporter puzzled over the significance of the key.

"It might," he guessed, "be a hint of prison. Or it might suggest ransom. Or some ghoulish fate such as being buried alive. Now Tom Julian, No. 3, drew an anchor. An anchor to me suggests being sunk in deep water—drowning. Ackerson got a wheel. The wheel stumps me, unless it's a weird reference to torture on a rack."

"It's the most utter nonsense I ever heard," protested Seldom. "By the way,

how does Charlie Fun describe Quong Tsue?"

"A wigged and one eyed Chinaman with the manners and in some respects the dress of a pearl button mandarin."

"You mean he wears pink silk and all that sort of stuff?"

"No. He wears a black suit and a turned up Panama hat. He coils his wig on his head. Speaks scholarly Chinese. All that, of course, might be disguise and pose."

"Does Fun give his neighbors a clear bill?"

"He does. That spells nothing, since the Chinese do not tell tales out of school to American police. That would be especially true if my theory is correct about the motive—that Quong Tsue is a punitive agent warring on four 'Melican Millionaires' who fleeced Chinamen."

"But criminy!" exploded Seldom. "Suppose this Quong Tsue makes good his threat to take a shot at Cotton!"

"Over the protests of Cap Cotton," explained Young, "the police have assigned a detective to act as Cotton's personal bodyguard until they have Quong Tsue by the heels. They may get him tonight."

"How?"

"Two cops are ambushed in his room at Charlie Fun's. Others are scouting Chinatown. Others are guarding the entrances and elevators of the Cotton Lines Building. Others are watching Cotton's house in Annadale. Cotton has armed himself with an automatic. And, as I mentioned, a detective is sticking at his elbow every minute."

"Where to, now?" inquired Seldom. Young had risen.

"To interview No. 3 and No. 4," he called back over his shoulder, and was gone.

AT SIX o'clock Seldom went home to Beverly Hills. His only occupation of the evening was to clean and oil his .30-30 deer rifle. Seldom was a first rate shot. For twelve successive years he had brought home his buck on the first day of the California deer season.

Seldom retired early and slept late. He arrived at his downtown office at eleven o'clock that Saturday morning to find the *Times* reporter, Young, awaiting him.

Young announced that the ambush in Quong Tsue's room had netted no fish.

"Naturally the earlier raid warned him," added Young, "so he kept away. His baggage is still at Fun's."

"Chances are he's gone back to Frisco," suggested Seldom.

"The Frisco police have been steered," said Young, "but they can't classify Quong Tsue. There are all of forty Chinese herb and remedy dealers in Frisco but none of them are named Quong Tsue. There are several Quong Tsues but they haven't left Frisco."

The reporter soon left. An hour later Seldom went home. He never worked Saturday afternoons.

He was a widower. His two daughters were married and had moved to another State. Neighbors, no doubt, wondered why Paul Seldom continued to live alone in his big Beverly mansion.

One reason was that Seldom was fighting desperately to conceal from public knowledge the fact that he was bankrupt. He was reputedly wealthy. He needed an illusion of wealth to further the schemes which were churning in his mind. Actually his house was mortgaged for every cent it would bring at a forced sale. So also were the four pretentious apartments owned by Seldom in Wilshire. Rentals from the latter just barely kept pace with their costly upkeep, interest, taxes and payments. But unless his several creditors compared notes there would be no early exposure of bankruptcy.

Four days ago Seldom had dismissed his one servant.

He had sold his limousine, keeping only a Ford coupé.

"Handier to get about in . . ." he told his neighbors.

Now, at one o'clock Saturday, he took

his rifle out to the garage and placed it in the coupé. The coupé had an oval pane of glass in the rear. By loosening screws, Seldom removed this oval pane, making an open window in the rear wall of his car.

He drove nineteen miles through Hollywood and Glendale to the Chevy Chase golf course.

The Chevy Chase course is a wide, green wonder spot in a cañon slicing through the oak mountain which divides Glendale from Flintridge. A crooked concrete highway, heavily screened with live oaks, skirts the south side of the cañon. Paul Seldom knew that the driving tee for Fairway No. 10 was only a hundred and fifty yards from an especially dense clump of oak brush on the highway.

There Seldom parked his coupé for the coldly calculated purpose of assassinating Oliver Cotton. He backed in among the oaks so that he became screened from other cars passing up and down the cañon, and so that the open oval window in the rear of his coupé faced the tee of hole No. 10.

He knew that Oliver Cotton was scheduled for a foursome this afternoon. Seldom himself had been invited to join that foursome, had declined because of his lame knee.

As he waited, he reviewed morosely the motive which embittered him vindictively against Oliver Cotton, and to a lesser degree against Julian and Ackerson.

Few there were who knew the history of Paul Seldom. Few knew that he had been born in Shanghai where he had lived until his twenty-fifth year. His father had been a Yankee merchant in partnership with a Chinese of the ruling class. When Paul Seldom was left an orphan at the age of three, the Chinese partner had taken Seldom into his own family. In that Oriental home Seldom had been reared to maturity. The first prattlings of his childhood had been in the Chinese tongue. He knew the Chinese people and customs better than he knew his own. Thus the rôle of Quong Tsue, now at his fiftieth year, was not difficult for Paul Seldom.

Few there were, however, who knew of his Shanghai origin. At the age of twenty-five, Paul Seldom had journeyed to San Francisco. One of his first acts had been to buy a lottery ticket in Frisco Chinatown. It was the lucky number. Going thence to Los Angeles, Seldom invested those winnings in Wilshire realty. In twenty years he became worth a million dollars, owned many stocks, four ornate apartments and a home in Beverly Hills.

Having begun with that lucky lottery ticket, inevitably he became a gambler, a player of stocks. The stock market, finally, devoured him—stripped him. He had squeezed forth a last fifty thousand dollars by giving second liens on his apartments. He invested the fifty thousand in Baja California Exploration stock. A sure thing, Seldom had thought, for the tip came from an astute multi-millionaire on the inside of the promotion.

Then it developed that the astute multi-millionaire, Captain Oliver Cotton, was only a bandit, using a crooked stock exploitation instead of a horse and gun. Seldom's last fifty thousand vanished into the coffers of the shipping magnate, Cotton.

Bitterly Seldom had brooded. A year ago he had injured his leg while deer hunting, and now he faced old age crippled, penniless.

Cotton—Cotton had played him for a sucker! So, he learned, had two other insiders, Julian and Ackerson. The fattest graft, though, had been Cotton's. Although Cotton had kept in the background behind dummy directors, and was thus not vulnerable to the law, Seldom knew to his own positive satisfaction that Cotton was the ring leader, had conceived and staged the trap for gullible investors. Seldom had stepped into the trap. His bitterness flamed against Cotton. He resolved to make Cotton pay with his life.

That would give him revenge. What else? Nothing, unless he also extorted

financial retribution from Cotton. That he could not do. What about the other two astute millionaires, Julian and Ackerson? They also had won with their left hands while seeming to lose with their rights. Toward them Seldom had no heart for murder. Could he make them pay in cash?

Seldom was sure that he could. They were Nos. 3 and 4. He himself was No. 2. Cotton was No. 1.

But here came Cotton now . . .

Four men, out on the links, were striding from the green of Hole 9 to the tee of Fairway 10.

Seldom, kneeling on the seat of his coupé with ready rifle, peered through his oval port hole and estimated the range. He wasn't afraid of being incriminated by the rifle. He had bought it a month ago in a pawnshop in Frisco Chinatown. Very likely they couldn't trace it there, but if they did, well and good.

He considered the foursome now only one hundred and fifty yards away. One was Thomas Julian. Another was Joshua Ackerson. A third was Oliver Cotton. The fourth player was no member of the Chevy Chase club. Seldom immediately catalogued him as a detective. A detective had been assigned, he knew, as a personal bodyguard to Cotton against the threat of Quong Tsue.

Here was the detective, sticking close, playing fourth man of the foursome.

Seldom watched Julian tee his ball and drive. Followed the drive of Ackerson. Next came the detective. The detective missed his ball and had to take two swings. Even at the distance Seldom heard a snort of disgust from Oliver Cotton.

Then Cotton teed his ball. His driver went back over his shoulder, poised for the swing. By now Paul Seldom was aiming through the oval window at the rear of his car. With the rifle barrel a foot through the hole, well supported, he drew a careful bead on the brawny torso of his target.

Cotton swung mightily with his driver. He hit the ball and sent it soaring down the fairway. He stood there, legs crossed, club uplifted in rigid after swing poise, watching the ball's flight.

Then Paul Seldom squeezed his trigger.

Cotton buckled, fell.

Seldom pushed the rifle out on the ground, squirmed under his steering wheel, scooted out into the twisting highway of Chevy Chase cañon. He shot in high gear down its timber screened twists. In one minute after the shot he had rounded two bends. He sped onward, gaining speed on a downgrade.

In five more minutes he burst out of the cañon into the outskirts of Los Angeles. Let them sift its million souls for Quong Tsue!

SELDOM spent that Saturday evening at his downtown club. Discussion there was rife over the murder of Oliver Cotton. Cotton, Seldom learned, had died almost instantly from a bullet which had punctured his heart.

"Lord, Seldom," said a fellow member, worried, "aren't you scared? I understand that crazy chink's got you listed for No. 2."

Seldom made a wry face.

"My only consolation," he said, "is that he didn't mark my card with a bullet. See?"

Seldom displayed his Quong Tsue card.

"How would you translate the key?" he inquired anxiously of those grouped around.

There were various and weird suggestions. Prison, blackmail and ransom theories were most numerous.

"He's out of luck, though," stated Seldom frankly, "if he tries to extort a hundred thousand out of me. Because I couldn't raise that much just now if I wanted to. Money's tight."

"You think the chink shot Cotton merely because he didn't come across?"

"Why else was he shot?" countered Seldom. "The warning ended, 'you will be shot'. And Cotton was shot."

"With a detective within inches of him!" marveled a club member. "Well,

Seldom, old scout, I don't exactly envy you until they run down this Quong Tsue."

Twice during the evening officials of the police force dropped in to discuss the situation with Seldom. They asked what he thought of the motive dug up by Fred Young, of the *Times*.

"It sounds reasonable," admitted Seldom. "But dammit, personally I wasn't in on that stock swindle. I was just a loser, like the two thousand Frisco Chinese. The only difference is that they lost chicken feed while I lost fifty thousand."

"Among the whole caboodle of them they lost four hundred thousand," corrected a police officer. "I think Fred Young is right. Fred's gone a little deeper into it now. He finds that the whole idea of selling colony stock to Chinese was born in Captain Cotton's brain. Cotton, running a line of steamers to China, knew how avidly the Chinese want to crash our gates. According to Fred Young, it was Cotton who suggested that they send stock salesmen to Frisco Chinatown. The idea added just four hundred thousand to the loot. Of course, nothing was ever proved on any one."

Seldom was more than willing for them to accept the theory of Fred Young. The discussion gained nothing. The only reason for holding it was that Seldom had been catalogued as No. 2 by Quong Tsue.

Sunday Seldom spent peacefully at his home.

Monday he arrived at his office at 10 A.M. During the day various officials and acquaintances dropped in to discuss the fate of Cotton and the motive of Quong Tsue. One of these was Thomas Julian. Julian was shaky. In fact the diminutive realtor was in a fair funk of panic. He, No. 3, with his own eyes had seen Cotton shot dead.

"What are you going to do, Seldom," he bleated, "if that chink demands a hundred thousand dollars?"

"I'm going to phone the police. What are *you* going to do?"

Julian licked his lips.

"You think it's all about that Baja California deal?" he inquired.

"It might be. I presume your conscience is as clear as mine on that score."

"Yes, yes. I never made a dollar on it."

Seldom knew he was lying. He knew quite well that Julian had dipped a fat spoil from the swindle pot, a payment explained on the books as a realty commission. Julian's fright now was the fright of conscious guilt. He was in the clear of law, but not safe from the menacing shadow of Quong Tsue.

"What does Josh Ackerson say he'll do," inquired Seldom, "in the event he receives an extortion threat from Quong Tsue?"

"He says he won't pay a cent," answered Julian. "At the same time he says he won't take any chances of getting shot. If he's threatened, he says he'll take a trip abroad."

Seldom had predicted just such an attitude from Ackerson. In fact there was a precedent for it under a far less aggravating circumstance. That was why Seldom had sketched a wheel on Ackerson's card from Quong Tsue.

There was nothing sinister about the wheel. It was merely a symbol of travel, or flight. It would take a smart detective to figure that out though, thought Seldom.

They had pounced immediately upon the significance of the bullet. They weren't so far wrong on the key. They would doubtless explain the anchor as something to drown a man with, or to drag him at the end of a rope on a hook. The wheel, though, would stump them. Good! Let them worry in circles about Quong Tsue's wheel.

Paul Seldom ate supper at a downtown restaurant. Then, as soon as it was dusk, he drove to the cabin in the ravine off Verdugo Road. It was there he kept the paraphernalia of Quong Tsue.

Tonight he wrote, using the portable typewriter maintained at the cabin, the due letter to No. 2. It read:

No. 2:

You are assessed $100,000.00.

Tomorrow, Tuesday, you will buy fifty diamonds worth that sum at a conservative estimate. At 5 P.M. Tuesday you will personally leave a bundle of soiled shirts at Mee Fong's Hand Laundry on lower Alameda. The diamonds must be in the pockets of the soiled shirts.

Remember the fate of No. 1.

—QUONG TSUE.

Paul Seldom addressed the letter to himself at his downtown office.

WITH it, and in his own character, he drove immediately to Chinatown. Making certain that he was not seen, which was quite easy on the dark street, he mailed the letter. He had an idea that the police could tell by characteristics of the stamp canceler and postmark in just what section of the city a letter had been mailed.

Having mailed the letter, Seldom drove on up Alameda. Over a hand laundry near the mouth of Ferguson Alley he noted the name, Mee Fong. He knew by earlier scoutings that Charlie Fun was a silent partner in Mee Fong's laundry. Not at mere random had Seldom chosen Charlie Fun's as the phantom domicile of Quong Tsue.

Seldom did not stop again. Two hours later he was at home in Beverly Hills.

In his office at eleven-thirty Tuesday morning, Miss Stimson handed him the letter from Quong Tsue. The lady was pale with fright. It was her practise to open all mail not marked personal; therefore she had read the threat.

Seldom, reading it, feigned a degree of fear himself. He then promptly telephoned the police.

An hour later the district attorney, in person, accompanied by two inspectors and a captain of police, called upon Paul Seldom.

There was a long conference. One inspector favored an immediate raid. The other favored a trap.

The police captain reported that the letter had been beyond doubt mailed in Chinatown. He also stated that Mee Fong's laundry was in part owned by Charlie Fun.

"Fun," he insisted, "is himself Quong Tsue."

"I doubt it," objected one of the inspectors gloomily. "We'll never know unless we trap him."

A trap was the final decision.

At 5 P.M. Paul Seldom, quite alone, limped up to Mee Fong's laundry with a bundle under his arm. In the bundle were six soiled shirts. In pockets of the shirts were various sealed envelops, and in each envelop were a few glass beads.

Now, in late afternoon, the streets of Chinatown were neither dark nor deserted. They buzzed with traffic. Honking autos congested the pavement of Alameda, in the center of which ran the S.P. main line. Scores of Chinese citizens thronged the walks.

Apparently there was not a policeman in the block. Actually, there was a riot squad concealed in an upper room opposite Mee Fong's. A certain peanut vender wheeling a cart up the gutter was really a detective. Also the apparent fireman of an S.P. switch engine coming down the middle of the street was a detective. Though he rang the bell with his visible hand, with his invisible hand he held a sawed-off shotgun. The engine was just opposite Mee Fong's when Seldom entered.

Seldom handed his bundle to a pinch faced, loose shirted Chinese.

"I want these shirts done right," he said gruffly. "I'll call for them Thursday."

"Velly good. Name please?"

"Paul Seldom."

"Velly good."

Seldom went out, and home.

For two days and nights official eyes never left the door of Mee Fong's.

On Thursday afternoon Seldom, again covered against danger of violence, called for the shirts. He took them to the rear room of a nearby drug store, where he was joined by a detective. The package was opened. The shirts were all there, beau-

tifully laundered. The glass beads were intact, in the same pockets. The seals of the envelops had not been broken.

"Our trap was too crude," remarked the detective in deep disgust. "He was wise that we were watching the joint. Wait a minute, Mr. Seldom. I'll phone in for orders."

He telephoned headquarters. He was the same detective, by name Grogan, who had been assigned as bodyguard to Oliver Cotton. He had stood on the golf green at Chevy Chase and seen Cotton shot dead.

He turned from the phone.

"Mr. Seldom, the chief says we're to take no chances. It's a cinch Quong Tsue knows you've tipped us. That means he wants you on the spot. My orders are to stick right with you, tonight, tomorrow and all the time, until they get Quong Tsue."

"Suits me to the ground," responded Seldom, feigning relief. He took Grogan home with him to Beverly Hills.

Grogan slept in the same room with him.

Riding in the Ford coupé, Grogan accompanied Seldom to the office next morning.

While Seldom looked over his mail, Grogan remained in the outer office with Miss Stimson. The only caller of the day was Inspector Smart of the police.

"WELL, we raided Chinatown again last night, Mr. Seldom," announced Smart. "We failed to pick up Quong Tsue. Some of us doubt if Quong Tsue really exists."

"You mean you think the name was coined by some local Chinese to cover his own crimes?"

"That's one of three theories," agreed Smart. "That a local Chinese, Charlie Fun for a best bet, has created Quong Tsue out of thin air."

"Why is Fun a best bet?" inquired Seldom, although from the very first he had schemed to have Fun suspected.

"Because threat No. 1 mentioned Fun's hotel, and because No. 2 threat mentioned a laundry in which Fun is a silent partner. Also we've found out that Fun was stung for a block of stock in Baja California Exploration, although most of those sucker investors were chinks from Frisco."

"And your second theory?" inquired Seldom.

"Is that there really is a Quong Tsue down here from Frisco; and that local Chinese sympathize with his motive and are giving him cover."

"And your third theory?"

"Is that the Baja California Exploration swindle has nothing to do with it at all. For instance, one of the four marked men, either Cotton, yourself, Julian or Ackerson, might have at some time in the past offended or wronged a Chinaman. Four wealthy men on the West Coast are bound to have had contacts with Chinese labor. This wronged Oriental may have launched on a fanatical revenge. He may have selected three other names to cloud his motive, or to levy tribute after creating a morale of terror. It's the least likely of the three theories, Mr. Seldom. Still we do not wish to overlook it. We want to check it this afternoon."

"How?"

"We want you, Julian and Ackerson to come down to headquarters. In the raid last night we picked up thirty-one Chinese with police records, plus Charlie Fun and Mee Fong. We can't hold them more than a day. So this afternoon we want them to file by you, Julian and Ackerson for inspection, like a rogue's gallery. If any one of the thirty-three Chinese faces suggests an old contact to any one of the three of you, it might give us a lead."

"Very well," agreed Seldom, "although in my case it's a waste of time."

"The inspection will be at two o'clock," informed Inspector Smart, arising to leave the office. At the door he turned. "Oh, yes, Mr. Seldom, there's one other point. Sing Wu, our undercover man on the Chinatown squad, gives us a new

slant. Sing Wu says that the citizens of the Chinese quarter might take this matter quite out of our hands."

"How!" inquired Seldom. "And why?"

"According to Sing Wu, who ought to know his own people, Chinatown will lay off if Quong Tsue's motive takes root in that crooked stock swindle that burned two thousand Chinese investors. In that case they would look upon Quong Tsue as something of a righteous crusader, a punitive agent justly scourging American crooks. If, on the other hand, Quong Tsue's motive takes root in a purely personal grudge, he would antagonize Chinatown. They don't want him bringing down police raids on their quarter, getting them in bad all for his private grudge."

"I get you. In that event they'd grab Quong Tsue and chastise him on the QT, in their own way."

"So opines Sing Wu," affirmed Smart, and left the office.

At two o'clock Seldom and Detective Grogan drove in the Ford coupé to police headquarters. As Seldom got out he took occasion to glance at the gage of the coupé's fuel tank. He noted that the needle showed only three gallons of gasoline.

For two days Seldom had deliberately neglected to have gas put into the coupé. From now on he meant to watch the gas gage alertly, so that he could predict the time and place when fuel might be exhausted.

He entered the police station with Grogan.

Julian and Ackerson were already there. Julian was pale and squeamish as he had been for days. Ackerson appeared to be annoyed by the entire affair.

"This Quong Tsue's getting my goat." bleated Julian. "I'll never sleep a wink until he's pinched."

"You wouldn't let him gyp you out of a hundred thousand dollars, would you?" prompted Seldom.

Julian's only answer was a sickly smile. Seldom knew that he was ripe for extortion.

"Speaking for No. 4," exploded Josua Ackerson, "I'll see Quong Tsue in hell before I cough up a cent!"

"This way, gentlemen," called Inspector Smart.

A few minutes later Seldom, Julian and Ackerson were seated in a row on a platform in a large room. Ackerson was on the right, Julian in the center and Seldom on the left. A file of thirty-three Chinese citizens entered from the right.

Each subject for inspection was made to stand facing Ackerson for a few seconds, then step on to face Julian for a similar period, then step on to face Seldom.

They were, except for the last two in line, the most disreputable denizens of Chinatown. One by one they passed Ackerson, Julian, Seldom. A few were sullen. A few were grinning. For the most part they maintained perfect poker faces.

In the rear of them stood detectives, alert for any sign from one of the three men on the inspecting platform.

Slowly the line moved on. Each unit of it got a clean bill.

Finally the last man, having passed Julian and Ackerson, stood in front of Paul Seldom. He was Charlie Fun. Fun, as when Seldom had first seen him, wore thick glasses. His manner was doleful in the extreme.

Charlie Fun stood for a full minute before Seldom.

Seldom, thick lipped, bald, ruddy, stared at him coldly. Then a thing occurred which sent the ice slithering down Seldom's own spine. He saw the left eye of Charlie Fun close—*and stay closed!*

Fun moved no other muscle. It was not a wink, nor a blink, because the eye did not again open. During the entire sixty seconds when Fun confronted Seldom, that left eye remained shut. Significantly shut. To Seldom, though to him alone, it was a dramatic accusation. He, here to inspect, was himself being inspected by Fun.

Fun, speaking no word, passed on and out.

And Paul Seldom knew that Charlie Fun knew that he was Quong Tsue!

SELDOM was in something of a sweat when he went out to the car with his bodyguard, Grogan.

Fun knew. The coiled queue, the compressed lips, the shellacked skin, the pearl button coat and the glib Chinese dialogue had not deceived Charlie Fun. The rogues' gallery had been reversed. The rogue on the platform had been recognized by the last man in line.

What would Fun do? Why hadn't he tipped the police?

To the latter question Seldom could summon but two answers. First, there was Sing Wu's theory that Chinatown would in its own time and in its own way take punitive measures against Quong Tsue. Second, maybe Fun was on the make himself. Maybe Fun planned to let him who masqueraded as Quong Tsue succeed in a hundred thousand dollar extortion and then demand a split of the loot.

Either guess had teeth.

What to do? Paul Seldom knew that he had gone too far to turn back. His major crime, the assassination of Cotton, was already done. Ahead lay only the intimidation of Julian and a trick which would filch a fortune painlessly from Ackerson.

The immediate thing to do, resolved Seldom as he drove away from headquarters with Grogan, was to get rid of that last three gallons of gasoline.

He told Grogan he wanted to inspect his four apartment houses in Wilshire.

Accordingly he drove from one to the other of them. Each was a five-story structure, elaborately furnished, representing an investment of about three hundred thousand dollars. No wonder the public thought the owner was a rich man! Only an auditor, assembling all the credits and debits of Seldom, balancing income against upkeep, would arrive at the bankruptcy of Paul Seldom.

At each apartment Seldom conferred with his manager. It was a blind. The only purpose was to burn three gallons of gasoline. Every time he alighted from his car Seldom noted the gage. Two gallons. One gallon. Half a gallon. When they returned downtown and parked near the Angeleno Club, the tank was practically empty.

Seldom and Grogan dined at the club.

Later, Seldom got into a card game. He played until eleven o'clock, Grogan sitting at his elbow all the while.

At 11:15 P.M. Seldom and Grogan went out to the parked coupé. For a route home Seldom chose Beverly Boulevard. The distance was thirteen miles. Estimating that his tank contained about a pint of gas with a full feed line and carburetor, Seldom hoped to get anywhere west of Western Avenue before the car stalled.

He hardly missed it a mile.

"Whatsa matter? Outa juice?" inquired Detective Grogan when they were half a block east of La Brea.

"Yeh, ain't it the limit?" deplored Seldom. He coasted, quite out of gas, to the curb. Then he added, "I see there's a drug store on the next corner. You better phone a filling station, Grogan."

"Be back in a minute."

Grogan got out and walked briskly toward the drug store.

Paul Seldom removed the seat, exposing the car's tools. Among them was a two-foot length of three-quarter inch lead pipe. It had been very carefully planted there for a week. Any one seeing it among the tools would have merely thought it an auxiliary handle for the jack.

Taking the pipe, Seldom replaced the seat. He removed his derby hat. He struck it with the pipe, crushing the crown. He laid the hat on the seat. He stepped from the car, placing the lead pipe on the curb. With his cane he limped away in the opposite direction from that taken by Grogan. A moment

later he turned a corner and became a shadow in the midnight gloom.

The next morning Paul Seldom was ensconced in the isolated cabin in the ravine just off of Verdugo Road. His leg was paining like sin, due to the punishment of a fearfully long walk. Just now he was reading the latest edition of the Los Angeles *Times*.

QUONG TSUE ATTACKS SELDOM

Victim No. 2 Assailed at Midnight on Beverly Boulevard

KILLED OR KIDNAPPED?

Chinese Terrorist in Swift Reprisal for Raids of Police

Almost from under the very nose of a detective assigned to guard Paul Seldom, wealthy apartment house operator, Seldom was carried off either dead or brutally clubbed by Quong Tsue.

Mr. Seldom and Detective Mike Grogan were en route to the Seldom home in Beverly. It is believed that the pernicious Quong Tsue trailed them in a car of his own, after having tampered with the gas tank on Seldom's coupé. It is believed that Quong Tsue calculated that Seldom, being lame, would remain in the car while Grogan telephoned a filling station.

THERE were columns of the account. One item of interest to Seldom was that Detective Mike Grogan had been dismissed from the force, charged with gross negligence in having left Seldom even for a moment.

"The police," concluded the news account, "are momentarily expecting Quong Tsue to take the offensive against Thomas Julian, millionaire realtor, No. 3 of the four marked men."

What a pretty funk, thought Seldom, must now possess Julian!

Therefore the time to strike was now, while the iron was hot.

Seldom produced his portable typewriter, the same machine used for all the communications of Quong Tsue, and wrote:

No. 3:

You are assessed $100,000.00, which is approximately the sum you dipped from the treasury of a scandalous land swindle under the guise of a legitimate realty commission.

Pack the sum in unmarked $20 bills in a black satchel. Tomorrow night at 10 P.M., you will go alone to the Los Angeles Santa Fé depot and check the satchel at the public check stand. Mail the claim check to John Joy, care of General Delivery, Los Angeles.

Conform secretly and discreetly to these instructions and you are forever free from my persecution. Disobey, evade or inform the police and meet swift death; some day when you least expect it you will be snagged by a hook and dragged through the streets.

—QUONG TSUE.

Seldom addressed the envelop to Thomas Julian at his office.

It must be mailed in Chinatown. Seldom had no car now, nor dared he travel about in the character of Paul Seldom.

He elected to leave his cabin only by night, using street cars and busses. For a moderate disguise he chose a toupee and beard, a disguise worn a month ago by a certain Paul Richmond who, in preparation for this emergency, had opened an account in a San Francisco bank. The toupee was curly and parted in the middle. The beard was finely pointed.

Seldom discarded his cane, preferring to limp without it to the nearest bus stop. He left at dusk with the letter to No. 3.

Two hours later he mailed it on the outskirts of Chinatown. Four hours later he was back in the Verduga cabin. He had stored supplies of canned food sufficient for a week.

He rested for twenty-four hours. Then, at the next falling of dusk and in the character of Paul Richmond, he limped to the Verdugo Road bus stop. He took with him a black satchel stuffed with burlap rags. He caught a bus. He arrived at the Los Angeles Santa Fé depot at 9:30 P.M. Buying the latest edition of an evening paper, he sat down in the waiting room to read the current comments on Quong Tsue.

There was a prodigious amount of space given to the Chinese and his four marked men.

There were theories galore. There was,

however, no mention of any threat against No. 3. The principal theme of suspense concerned the fate of No. 2.

No. 2's body, according to the account, had not been found. It was then brought out that No. 2's original card had borne no more sinister symbol than a key. A bullet for No. 1 and a key for No. 2! Death for No. 1. A locked door for No. 2?

One published guess was that No. 2 was being held alive in some dungeon beneath Chinatown as hostage for the correct behavior of Nos. 3 and 4 in the turn of their warnings.

The hands of the waiting room clock approached the hour of ten. Seldom took a seat from which he could watch the approach of automobiles to the main entrance.

At exactly ten he saw Thomas Julian drive up alone in his own closed car. Julian alighted, bearing a black satchel. Nervous, fearful, looking furtively over his shoulder like a thief in the night, the man hurried into the station and moved directly to the public check stand.

PAUL SELDOM knew that he must now take the one big chance in his entire chain of maneuvers. It might be a trap. Seldom was, however, counting much on the cowardly character of Julian. He considered it better than an even shot that Julian had *not* told the police of the threat.

Had he done so, a detective bodyguard would immediately have been assigned to Julian. Certainly Julian would not have driven downtown alone.

Or suppose it was a trap. Suppose Julian had told of the threat. In that case the satchel now carried by Julian would contain only rags and padding. Julian would check it, then mail the claim check to John Joy, care of General Delivery. The police would be in ambush at the postoffice J window to pounce on John Joy.

Having carefully weighed all these probabilities, Paul Seldom, in beard, toupee, plaid cap and a suiting quite distinct from any color or style ever worn by Paul Seldom, moved across the depot foyer in the wake of Julian.

Seldom likewise carried a black satchel. About him were scores of other travelers, many of them with satchels, many of them moving to or from the check stand. Seldom arrived there, forcing himself not to limp, only a few steps behind Julian.

Julian checked his bag. As the duplicate tag, or claim check, was tossed on the counter for him, Seldom, at his elbow, noted the number. It was 728. Julian took the check and hurried away. Seldom presented his own bag. He received claim check No. 729. He moved away in the opposite direction from Julian.

Quitting the depot, Seldom walked across the street to a restaurant. Now, as always, to walk without limping was the severest travail of his plot. In a booth of the restaurant he ordered a steak. While he was waiting for it, he took from his pocket some small rubber dyes, or stamps, and an ink pad. He also produced an ink eraser and a bottle of acid.

First with the acid, then with the eraser, he worked patiently on the figure 9 of his claim check. He did not disturb either the 7 or the 2. Finally he had the 9 quite dim. He selected the rubber stamp which made a figure 8 of the exact height and type as the figures on the claim check, a property acquired early in the original conception of Quong Tsue.

He stamped an 8 over the dim 9. The check now read 728.

The steak arrived and was partaken of leisurely. At 10:45 Seldom went over to the depot. A Santa Fé train was leaving for the East at eleven. Seldom bought a ticket for Phoenix, Arizona, and a lower berth on the Phoenix Pullman. He went to another window and bought a ticket for Barstow, California.

He then called a redcap. He gave the redcap fifty cents and the 728 claim check.

"Put my baggage in Lower 6 of the Phoenix Pullman," he directed, then turned and walked over to the newsstand.

Out of the corner of his eye as he

bought a magazine, he followed the movements of the redcap. He saw the redcap arrive cockily, as redcaps always arrive, in front of the check stand. The redcap offered a claim check and was given a black satchel. Whistling, the boy skipped out to the train sheds. Following at a distance Seldom saw him skip by the porter at the steps of the Phoenix Pullman, mount the steps, enter the Pullman and emerge a moment later empty handed.

Seldom did not go to the Pullman. He went to the chair car. At the steps thereof he displayed the ticket to Barstow, the desert junction point where the Santa Fé route splits, one fork going via Arizona to Chicago and the other directly northwest to San Francisco. The conductor passed him, and Seldom entered the chair car.

He walked through the train, car by car, toward the rear, until he came to the Phoenix Pullman. The only thing in Section 6 was a black satchel. Seldom took it. He retraced his steps through the train to the chair car.

The train pulled out. Later the conductor came by and took his Barstow ticket. Lights were dimmed. The rails clicked underneath and the occupants sprawled in sleep. As they neared Barstow at 2:30 A.M., Paul Seldom peered in his black satchel.

Money! Real money! Victory for the guile of Seldom! The spineless No. 3, warned by the fates of Nos. 1 and 2, fearing Quong Tsue's hook as he feared death and the devil, had come through with one hundred thousand in cash!

TWO DAYS later Seldom was registered at a San Francisco hotel as Paul Richmond. He called at the bank where Paul Richmond had a balance of $113.65 and made a cash deposit of six thousand four hundred and eighty dollars.

"I been down at Tia Juana playin' the races," he told the teller.

Seldom then proceeded to the office of a certain stock broker where, a month ago, Paul Richmond had done a little shoe string trading.

"I got more money to lose," he joked to the clerk who greeted him, and who vaguely remembered him. "Had a good break at Tia Juana."

The clerk was cordial. Seldom asked to see quotations on ten rails, ten oils, ten industrials and five aeros. He took them to a table and pretended to study them.

"I think they're ridiculously high," he told the clerk later. "My hunch right now is to play 'em short. For instance take this Ackerson Aeromotor Corporation Common. A hundred million dollar corporation. Now quoted at 188 flat. But do the year's dividends justify a nickel over a hundred? Not on your life! It's bound to drop, don't you think?"

"You do the thinking, Mr. Richmond," The clerk grinned. "But you better watch your step selling Ackeraero short. That's a mighty steady stock."

"What about a ten point margin?" inquired Seldom.

"Not a thing doing, Mr. Richmond. Twenty's the very least. And we'd have to have more money the minute, and if, it goes up an eighth."

Seldom handed over five thousand dollars in twenties.

"Shoot this roll for Ackeraero to drop," he instructed. "I'm at the Trocadero. Give me a ring if you want more margin and you'll get it in thirty minutes."

The next morning Seldom went to his bank and made a small deposit to the account of Paul Richmond. Going then to his broker's, he found Ackeraero quoted at 187. He had made two hundred and fifty dollars over night.

"What did I tell you?" he gloated wisely to the clerk. "Sell another five thousand dollars' worth short, same margin." This time he gave a check for two thousand and paid three in cash.

Later that day Paul Richmond opened small accounts in four other banks. The next day he sweetened each of these accounts, and sold more Ackeraero short at the broker's.

In two weeks he accomplished his purpose which was to invest all of the Julian money on the short side of Ackerson's stock without flashing too big a roll at any one time or place. During those two weeks the stock wavered from 188 to 186 and then stood firm.

Every day he read the Los Angeles papers. There was a great deal about the Quong Tsue mystery. One statement which interested Seldom was—

> Thomas Julian, No. 3 of the four marked men, denies having received any threat from Quong Tsue.

Naturally he would deny it, thought Seldom. Julian had paid, and paid through the nose. To admit having paid would make the sacrifice all in vain. At least that would be the viewpoint of Julian. Also, if Julian displayed the threat, the accusation therein about the fake realty commission connected with the old land swindle might lead Julian back to the carpet of the grand jury, where he had been a year ago. No doubt that had been a factor in Julian's submission to the threat.

Another oft occurring statement of the news items was—

> There are many who believe that Paul Seldom is held in duress, since his body has never been found and since the sign on his first card was a key.

On the day he invested the last dollar of the Julian money, Seldom, still wearing the curly toupee and Van Dyke beard of Paul Richmond, took a Pickwick bus for Los Angeles. Arriving there, he went by local bus after dark to the end of Verdugo Road. From the bus terminus he limped painfully to the ravine cabin which was the hub of his operations.

He lost no time in typing the threat to No. 4.

> No. 4:
> No. 1 paid with his life. No. 2 is a hostage, doomed unless redeemed by his own estate. No. 3, though too discreet to admit it, purchased his life. You will ask him how he did it, and do likewise, the same hour, the same place, tomorrow, Friday night.
>
> —QUONG TSUE

After dusk, Seldom mailed the letter in Chinatown. He then immediately took a train for San Francisco.

THE FINAL prize came now swiftly to his net. A day after his arrival in Frisco he read all the news dealing with the Los Angeles Chinatown sensation.

There was the news that Joshua Ackerson had turned his threat note over to the police, that a trap had been laid at the Santa Fé depot check stand without result. There were wild speculations about Quong Tsue. Since his latest message admitted that No. 2 was immured, the entire county of Los Angeles was being combed for Paul Seldom.

The next editions told of an interview with Joshua Ackerson, inventor of the Ackerson aeromotor and guiding genius of the Ackeraero Corporation.

"Life is too short," Ackerson told the reporters, "to spend dodging bombs and bullets. I'm taking a trip abroad for a year, or indefinitely. During my absence the industry bearing my name will operate at about fifty per cent. normal production. When local authorities become competent to control terrorists, I shall return and resume my endeavors at the old stand."

Having read this, Paul Seldom turned exultantly to the financial page of the same edition. At the very head of the alphabetical stock list was Ackeraero. It was quoted at 182.

"Falling like lead in a vacuum!" exulted Seldom.

The drop was, as he had known from the first, inevitable. The founder and guiding genius of Ackeraero, Ackerson, was too important a cog in the industry to decamp without injuring public confidence in the stock. Half production for a year, or indefinitely! Would not that certainly reduce the probabilities of dividends?

Seldom telephoned his broker for the latest quotation.

"180½, Mr. Richmond."

When, three days later, Ackeraero hit

165, where it stiffened, Paul Richmond cashed in. His net winnings were $104,000. Thus quite painlessly he collected from No. 4.

He rented a safety box in the name of Richard Houston, stowed away $204,000, total trimmings from Julian and Ackerson, then took a bus for Los Angeles.

Paul Richmond ceased to exist.

What about Quong Tsue? What about the mysteriously absent Paul Seldom?

The thing to do, decided Seldom, was to explain Quong Tsue convincingly to the police. A dead Chinese, preferably Charlie Fun, would explain Quong Tsue, provided that a key be found in the dead man's pocket which fit a door behind which was immured Paul Seldom.

In which case the police would rescue Paul Seldom. Seldom could then resume his character, revenge sated, solvent by virtue of $204,000 concealed in a San Francisco vault.

Arriving in Los Angeles, Paul Seldom went immediately to the cabin off Verdugo Road. His first act was to place the keys to the Richard Houston safety deposit box in a tin can, and bury the can in the woods back of the cabin.

His next act was to burn or bury every trace of his plot except certain of them which he wrapped in a stout package. What he salvaged in the package was Quong Tsue's braid of hair, a pearl button coat, a length of lead pipe similar to the one which had crushed his own derby hat, and two conspicuously long, heavy brass keys.

He rested for a night in the cabin.

The next day, still wearing the plaid cap, curly toupee and Van Dyke beard, he went by Pacific Electric to Santa Monica. At Santa Monica he took an Oxnard bus up the coast highway.

The bus conductor gave him a seat check on which was listed all the stops from Santa Monica to Oxnard, and punched the one to which Seldom paid his fare. The punched bus stop read, "Powder House Point."

The highway, for many miles northwest, hugged the beach. On the left was the Pacific Ocean, on the right were the cliffs and palisades of the shore hills. In many places there was such scant space between bluff and sea that the roadway had been, perforce, blasted from solid rock. At other places the bluffs fell away from the beach a mile or so.

The latter condition obtained at the bus stop called Powder House Point. Here the road hugged the base of the bluff and was a full mile from the sea. Seldom alighted and the bus went on to Oxnard.

There was now a mile of rocky wasteland between Seldom and the sea, culminating in a blunt point reaching into the surf. At the tip of that point stood a circular stone structure, like a low tower, or silo. Seldom limped toward it.

He neared the beach. It was rocky and isolated, not a bathing beach. Seldom knew that this desolate strip between road and sea was being held by a company who planned to grade it next year for a landing field. He knew all about the round rock house on the point.

He knew that it had taken tons of dynamite to blast out the Oxnard highway. Naturally the contractor had sought an extremely isolated spot for his explosive storage. Hence the round rock house on the point, where an accidental eruption of stored dynamite would not have been disastrous to traffic on the highway a mile away. When the road was finished last season, there had been no further use for it. Seldom, posing as a fisherman, had rented it for the alleged purpose of storing nets.

As he now came closer to it, he noted many "no trespassing" signs surviving from the time when the round rock house had contained dynamite. On the door of the house itself was a sign—

HIGH EXPLOSIVES
BEWARE!

The contractor's neglect in failing to remove these warnings was quite favorable to the privacy desired by Seldom.

Seldom, his leg by now paining him

severely, reached the door. He produced the two long, heavy brass keys, duplicates, furnished him at the time he had rented the structure to store nets.

With one of them he unlocked the door. He entered the circular area within. The interior was gloomy, floored with concrete, and contained nothing but a few empty dynamite boxes, a jug of water and a box of raisins. The water and raisins had been brought here by Seldom a month ago.

There was only one window, which faced the sea. The structure was as far out on the point as possible; in fact the spray at high tide occasionally splashed through the window. The window was barred with a stout metal grille. Its purpose had been to provide light and ventilation to men engaged in handling the explosives stored within. The walls, except for the window and door, were solid concrete.

Seldom did not remain five minutes. His only motive in coming was to make sure that the retreat was exactly as he had left it a month ago.

He went out, locked the door, limped back to the highway, caught the next bus for Santa Monica.

By then he was hungry, but he did not eat. It was nearing the time when he must be found half famished in the strong house of Quong Tsue.

AT SUNDOWN he reached the cabin in the ravine off Verduga Road. He donned the same suit in which Paul Seldom had disappeared from the vigilance of Detective Mike Grogan, but for the moment retained the curly toupee and Van Dyke beard. He put the two long, brass keys in his pocket, and with them the Oxnard bus check punched for the stop of Powder House Point.

He now permanently evacuated the cabin off Verdugo Road. Under his arm he carried the package which contained Quong Tsue's pearl button coat, the braid of hair and the length of lead pipe.

He was tired, hungry, leg weary. Yet with Spartan fortitude he pressed on to complete the final episode of his crimes.

It was 10 P.M. when he reached Chinatown.

He found it as on that first night, dark, quiet, apparently deserted. The wide iron gates were shut. A few were padlocked. The brick façades and jutting balconies gave few voices and fewer lights.

Seldom turned into a black and foul smelling alley which ran back of Charlie Fun's rooming house. Midway of the alley he drew a flash. With the flash he swept the area ahead only for an instant.

In that instant he saw what he sought, a bin of old tin cans back of a restaurant. Once before he had seen that bin of cans. He recalled peering out of the draped rear window assigned him by Charlie Fun. The bin of cans was directly across from it.

He groped now for the window of his own, Quong Tsue's, room. Had he not paid a month's rent for it in advance? For the moment he was Quong Tsue, creeping home.

Would the window be locked? If so he planned to jimmy it. He groped, found it. It was not locked. Quong Tsue had unlocked it himself, that first night in the room, to open an emergency avenue of escape. Evidently Charlie Fun had neglected to relock the window.

Seldom, standing in the dark alley, opened the window. His hand went in. He knew those heavy drapes by the smell and the feel of them. Holding his package tightly under his arm he crept over the sill into the room.

He left the window open but drew the drapes tightly shut.

For an instant he played his flash about the room. It was just as he had left it. He saw the sample case of Quong Tsue, apparently undisturbed. The hall door was closed. So was the square teakwood gate shoulder high in the door.

Seldom extinguished his flash. By feeling and fumbling, he unwrapped his package. He hid the paper and the contents, except for the length of lead

pipe, under the moth eaten, multi-colored pillows of the bed.

He used the flash once more to locate the push button bell by which a guest might summon service from Charlie Fun.

He pressed the button, heard the bell ringing eerily up in the front part of the house. In utter darkness Paul Seldom then stood with his back against the wall near the door.

He hefted the pipe. For two reasons he must strike down Charlie Fun. First, Fun knew he was Quong Tsue. Just what Fun's game was he did not know. Since Fun had not squealed to the police, his guess was that Fun planned to demand a division of plunder from Seldom.

Secondly, Quong Tsue must be convincingly identified to the police. He—

But here came Charlie Fun padding down the corridor from front to rear. Seldom heard him and stood tensely gripping the lead pipe.

The sound of the footsteps ceased. There was a moment's silence. Then came a faint creak as the teakwood gate in the door swung open. A beam of light flashed through it. Seldom evaded its path by backing tightly against the wall to the left of the door.

He knew Fun was peering through. He was sighting along a flash into an empty room. Fun, no doubt, was wondering why he had heard the ringing of a bell.

Finally the main door began to creak open. The nose of Fun's flash came through, played around; its circle lacked only inches of including Seldom.

Seldom lifted his pipe, poised to strike.

Fun's shorn head appeared in the crack of the door. Seldom could imagine his puzzlement. What ghost of Quong Tsue, he must be wondering, had rung the bell? Or perhaps he had only imagined the bell!

He came a little farther into the room.

Then Seldom struck with all the might of his muscles.

The lead pipe crashed down on the shorn head of Charlie Fun with force to bash the skull of an ox. Fun crumpled. His flash went out as he fell.

Seldom shone his own downward into Fun's face for an instant, to assure himself that Fun was as dead as the nail in a coffin.

Now to work fast and get out!

From under a pink pillow Seldom took the pearl button coat and braid of hair. Groping in the dark, he rigged Fun as Quong Tsue. He coiled the braid on Fun's shorn head. He garbed the torso in the pearl button coat. He then let the body fall back on the floor, face up.

Seldom now produced the two long, brass keys to the round rock house on Powder House Point. He retained one. The other he slipped into the pocket of the pearl button coat on Fun.

In the same pocket he planted the Oxnard bus check punched for the stop of Powder House Point.

He snatched up the lead pipe, his own flash and the flash of Fun. He was about to leave when he thought of one new refinement of illusion. He shone the flash for another instant into the upturned face of Fun. Both of Fun's eyes were glazily open. Fun at the moment did not wear his hornrimmed spectacles. Seldom had heard that an eyelid will not move after death. He stooped and with the fingers of his right hand he closed the lid of Fun's left eye, while with the fingers of his left hand he held the right lid forcibly open. When he removed his hands the left did not open.

Good! Here was Quong Tsue, one eyed, even in death! What more would the police want? They'd find the conspicuously long brass key. They'd find the bus check punched for Powder House Point. Surely even the dumbest detective could now unerringly rescue Paul Seldom, No. 2 of the four marked men.

Taking the two flashes and the lead pipe with him, Paul Seldom slipped through the alley window, closed it after him and was gone.

HE FEARED that a night passenger getting off at Powder House Point, tonight of all nights, might be remembered by the busman. Therefore he took a train to Oxnard. He reached Oxnard at 1 A.M. He was grievously faint with hunger and the pain in his leg. But he dared not stop. He must beat the police to Powder House Point.

He limped down the road. When the headlights of a car appeared he stood aside in the dark. For one hour, two hours, three hours, he limped in agony. Yet even his physical distress bespoke success for his plan. For he need not now fake the pallor and anguish of Seldom, in Seldom's dungeon of duress.

It was just dawn when Seldom limped across the waste area from bluff to beach. Halfway across it he burned the Van Dyke beard, toupee and plaid cap of Paul Richmond. He went on, bareheaded. For Seldom's derby hat, he remembered, had been bashed in and deserted in the Ford coupé. He wore, now, the same suit worn at the disaster which had cost Detective Mike Grogan his job on the force.

He came at gray dawn to the round rock house.

With his duplicate key he unlocked the door. He entered and sank exhausted to the concrete floor. Had he really been confined there for weeks by Quong Tsue, on a ration of water and raisins, he could hardly have seemed more utterly sick and forlorn.

He arose finally and drank a little stale water from the jug. He ate a few raisins. He opened the door and peered toward the distant highway at the base of the bluff. His vital need was to remain alert for rescuers. He closed the door except for a narrow crack through which he could peer. The grated window was on the opposite side and through it he could see only the sea.

He placed his brass key in the keyhole on the inside of the door.

He waited.

All through the morning he waited for the seed of his clues to bear fruit in the rescue of Paul Seldom.

Occasionally he limped across to the seaward side of his tower to the barred window. Spray from the surf flicked through to make brine of the sweat on his brow. He saw, that way, only the skyline of the Pacific Ocean.

Except for those few excursions to the barred window he remained alert at his vigil by the landward door. Through the crack of it he watched the traffic move along the highway which skirted the bluff a mile to the east. Noon came, and still he watched without result.

He ate a few raisins. He drank more of the stale water from the jug. He paced the room. He gazed fretfully through the window at the sea. He peered impatiently through the crack of his door.

He grew more and more nervous at the délay. He damned the stupidity of the Los Angeles police. The fools! Couldn't they follow a broad trail like this? They knew by the note to No. 4 that Quong Tsue had No. 2 immured in some secret prison. Surely by now they had found a long brass key on the corpse of Quong Tsue. Surely they would divine its use. And surely they would take the tip of the punched bus check and come speedily to Powder House Point.

The afternoon dragged. A thousand automobiles sped by on the distant highway. Finally, near sundown, Seldom peered through the crack of his door and saw that his vigil was done.

He saw two closed cars which had approached from the direction of Los Angeles pull to the side of the road at Powder House Point bus stop. Even at a mile he could make out that the two cars were filled with men. He saw an arm protrude from a car and point to the isolated stone house on the beach. Then both cars turned at right angles and approached, bumping slowly over the ungraded strip, directly toward Paul Seldom.

Quickly Seldom closed his door. His heart was swelling to his throat. It had been a long and fearful strain, leaving him

near mental as well as physical collapse. Yet in five minutes more all his travail would be done.

He turned his brass key in the lock, locking himself in. He limped across to the barred window. The key, of course, must never be found inside. So he threw it through the grating as far as he could. It landed with a splash in the surf.

Seldom then sat down dejectedly on a dynamite box between his jug of stale water and his package of raisins.

He dropped his bare head in an attitude of despond.

He could hear the automobiles, taking the bumps in low gear, nearing the round rock house. He heard them draw to a halt before his door. He heard men stepping from both cars.

Rescue! He waited. He expected a banging on the door.

Yet no one banged, or called, or turned the knob. Only silence came from without. From the silence grew an ominous threat. It frightened Seldom.

He raised his head and looked at the door. Why didn't they open it? They had a key. Since they had found the punched bus check, they must also have found the key in Quong Tsue's coat. Well, why the devil didn't they use it?

A stealthy sound on the seaward side of the house caused Seldom to whirl. He stared at the barred window. A face was framed between the bars. It was a stolid amber face under a shorn pate. Around the pate was wrapped a white bandage. The face was Charlie Fun's.

A nausea of terror seized Seldom.

Charlie Fun! He saw that Fun's left eye was closed in a hideous, permanent wink—just as Seldom had left him!

Suddenly Fun disappeared. Another Chinese visage took the place of Fun's at the grating. This time it was Mee Fong, the laundryman.

Mee Fong's left eye was likewise closed. He neither grinned nor leered. His expression was utterly placid. Yet for the full minute he stared at Seldom he kept his left eye shut.

Mee Fong disappeared. Another Chinese, unknown to Seldom, supplanted him at the bars. He likewise held the lid of his left eye shut.

FACE after face, all one eyed, all alike lacking in either sympathy or severity, appeared at the bars of the window. Eight Chinese in turn peered in on Paul Seldom. Their stolid faces maddened him, at first, and finally chilled him to the very marrow of his spine. He shrank against the far wall of his tower, staring, stifling a shriek with a fist half jammed in his mouth.

He sensed the imminence of a frightful doom. Here was a punitive posse of eight Chinese, led by Charlie Fun, come to deal with Quong Tsue! The lead pipe had failed, after all, to crack the thick skull of Fun, who, it was now clear, had only been stunned. He had survived to confer with his own people. They, not the police, had found the punched bus check. The bus check was dated yesterday. It was therefore fair proof that Fun's assailant had used the Oxnard bus recently, either from or to Powder House Point. Being the only clue to the masquerader's lair, they could hardly overlook it. Nor did Seldom forget a suggestion of Inspector Smart's, quoting Policeman Sing Wu: that if Quong Tsue's motive was all wrong from the standpoint of Chinatown, Chinatown would deal with him itself.

The last and eighth face disappeared from the grating. Seldom heard a hum of Chinese whisperings, too indistinct to understand.

He arose and staggered to the window. Squatting in a huddle on the beach, he saw the eight Chinese with their heads close together.

They were conferring. They were debating with vigorous shakings of heads, as though none of them could suggest a doom severe enough for Quong Tsue. That it would be the doom of death Seldom had no doubt. He shuddered in acute terror. What manner of death? Would they rend him limb from limb?

At last the huddled group arose. They came in a body to the window and gazed in upon Seldom. They spoke no syllable of threat or rebuke. For all their expression Seldom might have been a stone in the wall.

After a moment Mee Fong passed out of sight around to the automobiles. He returned with a hammer and a nail taken from a tool box.

Charlie Fun, standing about a yard from the wall, now bent forward so that his back became horizontal, in the pose of a boy playing Leap Frog. Mee Fong, with the hammer and nail, climbed to his back.

Standing at full height on Fun's back, Mee Fong reached up and touched the outhanging eave of the concrete tower. The eave was stripped with wood. Mee Fong drove the nail into the wood strip along the eave.

One of his mates then handed him a string. Mee Fong tied the string to the nail, letting it dangle.

Its hanging end was about three feet from the bars of the window. Seldom gaped, unable as yet to explain the hanging string.

Mee Fong jumped down from Fun's back. Then Charlie Fun produced a long, brass key. It was the key to the round rock house. Fun tied the key to the end of the string.

The eight Chinese passed out of sight around the tower. A moment later Seldom heard them chug away in the cars.

Relief that they had not murdered him left him weak.

When he recovered a bit, he reached an arm through the bars of the window. He strained his shoulder against the grating, stretching his arm as far as he could. The tip of his longest finger almost touched the suspended key.

For a bleak hour he strained to touch the key, all in vain. It hung free, a yard from his face, an inch from his futile grasp.

Beyond the key lay a blue desert of ocean. Its splashings mocked him. He turned, stumbled to the door, beat upon it. He shouted; he shrieked. He raved like a madman. None heard him. He knew now the starkness of his plight; he'd locked himself in his own trap and thrown away the key.

Again he stumbled to the grating and snatched for the key; again he strained his shoulder against the bars; again he failed by a tantalizing inch to touch the key.

Night came, and deepened his gloom of despond.

All through it he stretched and strained for the key, although he could not see it.

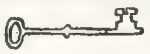
Despair, by dawn, had nearly finished him. He staggered to the door and beat on it till his palms were bruised. At last he collapsed on the floor.

There he saw the corner of a white card showing beneath the door. Evidently it had been there all night, and was some message left by the eight Chinese.

He pulled the card to him.

It was one of his own cards. On the back of it was a message:

Paul Seldom:
You are Number Two.



—QUONG TSUE

ALASKAN SHANGHAI

A Tale of the North Pacific

By VOLNEY G. MATHISON

OLEY'S mother had been seacoast Norse and his father wild Irish, which accounts for the two rather incompatible facts that Oley's last name was McCarty and that he was a sailor. He was better known on the San Francisco waterfront as Gentleman Oley. This was because he had once worn a rented Prince Albert to the wedding of a shipmate. Considerably drunk, he had lunged from the scene of the festivities, strayed aboard the molasses ship *Mohican* just being towed from the Brannan Street pier; and made a round trip to Cuba in full dress.

But now Oley looked anything but a gentleman as he shuffled along, his big body sagging in his loose dungarees, his paunch slack, and his tousled gray hair sticking askew around the edges of his faded blue cap.

Oley had just been paid off a whaler with a silver dollar. A dollar for ten months of toil in the Arctic off the bleak tundra of the north Alaskan coast, eating stinking beef and slimy rice and fighting

mosquitoes; rowing for hours in the heavy seas in pursuit of whales that got away; and then working the ship back to San Francisco. All that for a dollar!

"You know what you signed," the commissioner had snapped, impatiently. "Usual fishing ship articles—a dollar for the run to make the agreement legal, and a share of the catch. There was no catch. Hustle along now!"

"Gol dog!" rumbled Oley, as he clumped heavily out of the gloomy old customs house.

This was the second time that Oley McCarty had been stung on fishing ship articles. The previous year on the square-rigger *Star of Alaska* he had vainly pursued salmon in the Bering Sea with a gill net and had returned without a payday.

Gentleman Oley resolved mightily that he was through with fishing.

"A tollar!" he muttered, indignantly. "An' I didn't vorked so hard since I was born. I like to see myself goin' fishin' in Alaska again. Gol dog!"

FORTUNATELY for Oley, his credit was good at the sailors' boarding house of Torker Torkersen, the cross eyed Finn; but there was little pleasure in congregating on the waterfront with only a dollar to spend. And besides, that dollar had been too hardly earned to be lightly squandered. Instead, Oley bored a hole through it and tied it to his nickel plated watch with a piece of string.

That afternoon he came to the cigar stand of Barnacle Johnson, a shoreside plutocrat who owned a lot of things, including a certain old dark green ark on stilts down on the mudflats of San Diego. Oley coveted that ark. There was a chance to rig a launchways there and lead a peaceful life in the warm sunshine, doing a little painting and overhauling for owners of small boats.

This had been Oley's dream for five years, but he was still as far away from it as ever.

"I still got the ark, Oley," called out Barnacle Johnson, espying the unhappy old salt. "I'll come down to eighty dollars. Is it a bargain?"

"I ain't got no eighty tollars," said Oley, heavily. "I only got bad luck." And he rolled on, slowly.

Of a sudden he came into collision with a long, lean and gnarled old sailor with droopy black mustaches, who was swaying forward unsteadily.

"By yiminy!" exclaimed the black mustached one, coming to a stop and looking at the disconsolate figure in front of him. "Yentleman Oley!"

Oley perked up and stared back.

"Gumboot Hansen! Gol dog! Th' last time I see you, Gumboot, we was in Rio!"

"I got broked in Rio," said Gumboot. "Das consul packed me home on a cattle ship. Turrible, she vas. Now I be on th' *Serena*. What ship you got?"

"I don't got no ship," said Oley, sadly. "I yust been fishin' an' I got paid off vit a tollar."

"You come vit me, by yiminy," exclaimed Gumboot Hansen. "We ain't got a full crew yet on th' *Serena*."

Oley went with Gumboot to survey the *Serena*, which was lying a short distance off, at the Embarcadero bulkhead. The vessel was a small, luggish looking three-master.

"She's awful deep loaded," said Oley. "Vere do she go?"

"Shumagin Islands," said Gumboot Hansen. "We take salt an' go to th' North Pacific Codfish Company's places up dar."

"Gol dog!" said Oley, rearing back. "Fish! Codfish? Gol dog!"

"We don't fish," explained Gumboot. "We discharge and come back again right avay."

"I don't like no fishin'," stated Oley emphatically.

"No, and I don't like it," declared Gumboot.

So Oley shipped on the *Serena* with Gumboot, and twenty-five days later as he stood in iced oilskins on the deck of the wildly pitching old schooner he sniffed the woollies that were howling off the Alaskan Peninsula.

The weather was stormy and thick; snow flew in blinding flurries through the double reefed sails of the *Serena*. Two white capped mountain peaks were sighted during a lull in the wintry squalls. The captain decided that one of these was the lofty crest of Bird Island and the other the tip of Popaloff Island. He headed the vessel between them to make passage to the inner side. Then darkness fell and more snow squalls set in.

Of a sudden there came a tremendous, jarring crash under the bows of the *Serena* that threw every sailor out of his bunk. The ship heeled far over, her stem rising swiftly, her hull quivering under the grinding roar of the boarding seawater.

The crew, scrambling into their oilskins, plunged out on to the blizzardy deck, to be greeted by a frothing comber that hurled them drenched and gasping against the forecastle head, while water streamed down the scuttle into their quarters.

Rearing and disappearing lines of white thundered along the hull, dashing on to a low black loom of shore under the *Serena's* bows. Booms slammed and crashed, tackles had gone adrift, ragged tatters of canvas thrashed in the wind. With every boarding sea, the ship lifted at the stern; then set heavily, jarring and trembling, while the collapsing breakers roared over her in a torrent of snarling water. Spray flew through the whipping rigging, congealing into white masses of sludge ice that fell in chunks into the combers which poured over the broken hull.

The sailors knew that it would be swift death to attempt a landing through the surf. They would be strangled, their bodies shattered; or escaping the sea, they would only freeze on the rocks. They got back into the high standing forecastle and sat around in their dripping oilskins, bracing themselves against the rolling lunges of the ship.

"Shipwrecked in Alaska, we are," said Oley. "This is tough. I sailed vit a tollar."

"Why did you do such a fool thing?" demanded one of the men, glumly. "Now look!"

CONTRARY to the expectations of the sailors, the *Serena* did not break up. There was tremendous strength in that old hull, and with the coming of murky, snow hazed dawn, the vessel was still standing on the rocky shore, bearing the brunt of the sea.

Close abeam to starboard loomed a white blanketed mountain; on the opposite rail towered another ridge. The captain's error now became apparent; the ship had struck on a low neck of land between the two ragged peaks that he had mistaken for separate islands.

Fishermen from a cod station on Unga Island to the westward could be seen out in their dories. They evidently sighted the stranded schooner and sent word to the Pacific Company's station at Pirate Cove, for that afternoon a queer looking old powerboat, black hulled, broad and clumsy, with only a few patches of gray paint showing on her upperworks, came chugging heavily toward the wreck.

At the wheel stood a stocky, pointed eared man, with short thick legs that went straight down like the prongs of a garden fork from his barrel shaped body. His wind blackened face was leathery and shaggy bearded; his mouth was a great lipless gash reaching almost from one ear to the other. He wore a greasy sheepskin coat, caribou skin trousers, and a ragged fur cap.

Taking a line from the *Serena*, he made his powerboat fast on the quarter, at the more sheltered side of the wreck.

"Hello, Holkey. We're saltin' th' ocean for you!" called out one of the sailors, recognizing the boss agent of the Pacific Codfish Company, better known in the Shumagins as Wolf Holkey, and famous for his invincible determination to get away with all the codfish in the sea.

"This is a fine mess, yes," said Holkey, scrambling up a rope lowered for him. His dark browless eyes were snapping. "Three months I been waiting for salt and store goods, and this is no place for 'em."

He addressed himself to Oley, who

happened to be standing nearest him.

Oley did not at all like the looks of the Pirate Cove boss agent. The man had a peculiarly wolfish appearance, with that gash of a mouth, the little beady eyes and the queerly pointed ears.

"I wonder, can I save the salt," muttered Holkey, beginning to claw at the broken planks of the forward hatch. "It's in good strong sacks, I think. Got to have it for the spawn fishing."

The boss agent set the crew of the *Serena* to work stripping the wreck of everything that could be gotten off. He successfully discharged a large part of the cargo in the schooner, including several thousands of the dripping bags of coarse fish salt.

Then he took the crew off, placed a man here and there in the company's codfishing stations scattered among the Shumagins. Oley he took to Eagle Harbor, a lonely cove on Nagai Island, and landed him on the tumble down little wharf, before the old sailor realized what was up.

"Lookey here," said Oley anxiously, as he stood staring about him on the weather blacked landing. "What you leavin' me in this place for?"

"To fish," answered Wolf Holkey, succinctly. "Get busy and fish for the summer and make yourself some money."

Oley pulled back as if struck.

"Fish?" he exclaimed, his jaw dropping.

"I didn't say grizzly bear hunting," said Holkey.

"I don't like fishin'—" began Oley emphatically.

"Oh, no?" returned Holkey, coolly. "Well, you got eight or ten months to learn to like it."

"Look hyar," Oley burst out angrily. "I shipped on th' *Serena* for a sailor. I want to be sended back to San Fransciso. You can't make me do no fishin'!"

"You don't say!" sneered Holkey.

"What did you done vit Gumboot?" demanded Oley suddenly.

"He's fishing—Sannak Reefs to the westward," answered Wolf Holkey. "He'll stay there, too."

"Gol dog!" said Oley. "Gol dog!"

SHIVERING in the cold and the gathering darkness, Oley took up his sea bag and walked with worried mien up to the dilapidated bunkhouse of the Eagle Harbor fishing station. There were some thirteen men in it, mostly old-timers on the islands. They were a wild, savage lot, and Oley didn't like them at all.

In the icy, blustery dawn they turned out grumbling, their teeth chattering, and after a breakfast of sodden pancakes and black coffee went down to the dory line and got into their blue hulled boats. They pulled out, rowing strongly in the face of the freezing north wind, making for the fishing grounds in the Straits, about three miles away.

Oley sulked in the bunkhouse until Swagger Sharpeneck, the surly straw boss, came in and caught him there.

"What you doin' in here?" he demanded, his big, loose pocketed blue eyes glinting.

"I sit hyar till you took me back to San Francisco," began Oley. "I'm a sailor—"

"You'll find yourself goin' damn hungry if you don't get out and fish," snarled Swagger Sharpeneck. "You either take a dory and snail cod or go over the hill!" And Swagger raised a hairy arm in a gesture toward the white slopes of the mountain towering above the little codfishing station. "Up there or fish," he repeated, scowling.

"What's over dar?" queried Oley, looking up the glacier fluted ridge.

"A good slide into the Pacific Ocean," returned Swagger.

Oley, after going without some five or six meals, capitulated and took a dory. His spirit rankled within him as he pulled on the heavy sweeps, his big booted feet planted in the slimy bilge water of the heavy blue boat. Freezing gusts of northwest wind blew into the cove from across Nagai Straits where the grim white barrier of the Alaskan mainland showed, icy and bleak under the wintry sky. A few gulls swooped overhead, soaring on the blasts, uttering shrill cries.

Nagai Island lay a long broken white ledge of granite on the surface of the sea, a battery of barren and glacier scored ridges covered with snow. Down in the cove the buildings of the Eagle Harbor station looked like little black dots, too far away now to reveal their unpainted ugliness.

Oley reluctantly put out a cod line to which was fastened sinkers and a large hook baited with a piece of salt pork. He lowered it cautiously, and almost immediately felt the tug of a codfish.

"Gol dog!" grumbled Oley.

He began pulling on the cold wet line. A huge, gleaming white cod came up, finning slowly, killed by the release of pressure on its stomach, which had burst. Oley hauled it over the gunwale into the boat.

With a low, rumbling oath, he glared at the big fish which gave a few splashing flaps of its tail. Then Oley put his line down again.

In less than a minute another cod had swallowed the bait. Oley unwillingly pulled him in. The fish were a nuisance. After Oley had dragged up three, he lowered a bare hook, somewhat uneasily. But the hungry cod would not bite on that, and Oley returned at two o'clock that afternoon with the three fish in his blue dory, while all the other boats were heavily loaded.

"What's the matter?" demanded Swagger Sharpeneck. "Where's your fish?"

"I couldn't catch no more — they vouldn't bite," said Oley, and he lifted his three fish on to the fish box.

The straw boss scowled at Oley and at the three codfish.

"You're pretty cute," he snarled. "Well, you can get up here and take a hand to the dressing just the same. Come along, now! Hook on to a wheelbarrow and start brining."

Oley was dismayed. He had overlooked the fact that the codfishermen customarily shared the work of dressing the catch, high and low boats participating equally.

One brawny man with a rapier edged splitting knife grasped the fish by the gills, slit them neatly, slashing out the entrails and backbone. Others cut off heads and tails, washed the fish, and threw them into iron barrows. These Oley had to wheel industriously up the creaking wharf to the brine tanks in the shoreside salt sheds. He got up a good sweat before the work was done.

"You made nine cents," Swagger Sharpeneck informed him.

"Gol dog!" said Oley.

FOR THIRTEEN days Oley reluctantly fished in Eagle Harbor. The fish were after him in a rage, it seemed; and the only way Oley could keep them off his lines was by hiding his hooks in his boat. Each day he rowed in with two or three cod, and the indignation of Swagger Sharpeneck grew.

But Oley had to do his share of the dressing of the fish and that greatly diminished the satisfaction he got out of soldiering. The work was wet and unpleasant; the men were uncongenial; and the food, cooked by a surly Jap, was extremely poor.

One day a dory put into the cove, and in it was Gumboot Hansen. He looked gaunt, ragged and starved.

"By yiminy, I runned avay," said Gumboot. "Clear from Sannak Reef!"

"You did!" exclaimed Oley. "Where you goin'?"

Gumboot Hansen pointed across the Straits of Nagai toward the white peaks of Unga Island.

"There's another company dar," said Gumboot. "The Alaska outfit. I think they got a ship goin' out soon."

"We'll both go," said Oley.

Some of the other fishermen in the bunk-shack learned of their plans.

"You can't do it," they said. "You'll never get across that strait. There's head winds and a strong current."

"No?" inquired Oley.

"No?" echoed Gumboot Hansen.

The next morning they rowed out on the fishing grounds; then, without paus-

ing, headed on, facing into the rough, wind-torn surface of the dangerous passage. The fishermen back in their dories stared at them in wonderment.

They rowed strongly, standing with their seamy old faces to the bitter wind, laying to their big sweeps. That night they were halfway across. The next morning they came up to the high, steel lagged Unga wharf.

On the landing stood a big, rawboned Swede with ugly looking blue eyes.

"Vere you comed from?" he demanded of the two old sailors in the blue dory.

"Over dar," replied Oley, pointing back across the windy black surfaces of Nagai toward the ragged white ranges of the island at the farther side.

The Swede followed the gesture, and then looked down incredulously at the two men.

"We been shanghaied," asserted Oley.

"We want to go to San Francisco," said Gumboot.

"You fellers git avay from here!" exclaimed the Swede. "Ve don't have any-t'ing to do vit none of Holkey's dory tramps hyar! Git out of our cove!"

Oley stared up at the speaker, his eyes and chops drooping. Gumboot stood clutching an oar, his face going long and dejected.

"Go on!" snarled the Swede. "Git back where you comed from!"

With slow motions of their gnarled limbs, Oley and Gumboot put out their heavy oars. Silently they pulled back into the Straits of Nagai.

"We're shanghaied in this country, Gumboot," said Oley.

"It's so," groaned Gumboot.

"It was bad luck, comin' on the *Serena* vit my tollar," stated Oley.

"You ought to get rid of it," Gumboot declared.

Oley pulled it out, unrove it from his watch, and looked at it long and thoughtfully.

"I vorked awful hard for das tollar," he said, heavily.

Then he reared back and cast it away from him into the sea. It struck into the black side of a wave and vanished in a little splash.

"I hope a codfish chokes on it," growled Oley.

The two old sailors leaned on their oars and looked at the spot where the dollar had gone. Then they raised their eyes and gazed longingly to the southward, where the seas rolled away in dark heaving purple toward the gray of the horizon. San Francisco and the sunny latitudes lay that way.

"If we had a sail on this hyar boat—" began Oley.

Gumboot stared at him, and Oley stared back. Their leathery pocketed eyes widened with the great idea.

"She's a good boat," said Gumboot, bending over and scratching on the rugged gunwale with a big, broken thumbnail.

"She'll ride through a cyclone," asserted Oley.

"It's turrible far," objected Gumboot. "Ve might be drowned."

"We won't have to fish, though!" said Oley.

"No, we won't," agreed Gumboot.

They pulled into Eagle Harbor in an exhausted and famished condition, and were just in time to get in on the dressing of a heavy catch of codfish. They worked silently, their minds full of their great idea.

Holkey came over that afternoon; and his wolfish face drew into a snarl and his pointed ears seemed to twitch as Swagger Sharpeneck told him of the shirkers.

"I'll fix 'em," said Holkey. "I'll take 'em back with me to my own station at Pirate Cove. They'll bring in fish or starve."

"WOLF HOLKEY'S goin' to take you two over to Pirate Cove tomorrow," a fisherman informed Oley and Gumboot that evening. "I heard 'em talkin'. An' you'll be damn sorry, when you get over there."

"He is?" exclaimed Oley, rearing back on the rude bench where he sat in deep thought.

"He is?" echoed Gumboot Hansen, throwing out a long arm and half rising.

The two old sailors looked at each other, and silent agreement traveled between their eyes. When they went into the cook house for the usual nine o'clock douse of muddy coffee, they hung around until nobody was near; then they broke into the padlocked larder and removed an armful of gallon sized cans containing meat, together with a keg of hard biscuit and a little sugar.

They lugged these down through the cold and gusty darkness to the wharf. Then they brought Oley's dory in from the line and put the food aboard. Taking two trawl mooring casks from the wharf, they filled them with water.

"How much water will we need?" queried Gumboot.

"We can live on half a gallon a day," replied Oley. "Them two kegs will last us a month."

"We got to get a sail," Gumboot reminded his shipmate.

A tarpaulin was abstracted from Holkey's clumsy old powerboat which was moored alongside the tumbling wharf. Two extra oars were taken from the landing and put with the canvas into the dory.

In the midst of all this, steps sounded on the wharf.

Oley and Gumboot crouched down in the dory breathlessly. Their sea bags were still up in the bunk-shack.

"What's goin' on down there?" came the voice of Wolf Holkey.

The two guilty old sailors remained huddled in their boat.

"Look here, what you fellows up to?"

Footsteps thudded away to the salt shed at the end of the wharf, then returned, while a lantern cast its rays on a pair of moving caribou clad legs and the blue barrel of a high powered rifle.

"Out oars!" whispered Oley to Gumboot, slashing the mooring line with his clasp knife.

"By yiminy!" choked Gumboot, and he struck his oar blade into the water.

"Come back here!" yelled Wolf Holkey, waving his lantern and rifle, up on the high black wharf. "You fellows come back here with that dory!"

"Row, Gumboot!" panted Oley.

"Row, Oley!" panted Gumboot.

They laid to the sweeps. The heavy blue dory surged off into the choppy waves of the Straits of Nagai. A rifle cracked behind them, spitting red tongues of fire into the gusty blackness of the night. Bullets struck into the water with snarling plops.

"We're gettin' away," wheezed Oley. "Row like anyt'ing!"

The shooting stopped. Then the heavy chugging of the engine of Holkey's powerboat sounded on the wind.

"He's comin' after us, Oley!" cried Gumboot.

"Gol dog!" said Oley.

They rowed desperately a few strokes.

"We better stand in to the beach," gasped Oley. "Mebbe we can fool him."

THE TWO sailors whirled the dory at right angles and headed in toward the reef guarded shore. Close outside them came the rumbling *kachug* of the searching powerboat. They rowed until they were under the blackly lowering shore cliffs where the lumping waves toppled dangerously, to fall into thundering combers to leeward.

They skirted the shore, heading south. Twice the exhaust of the powerboat sounded alarmingly near in the blackness of the windy night; then died away again and at last they heard it no more. Pulling their boat out from the beach, they once more headed into the Straits of Nagai.

Morning found them scudding before a roaring northwest wind, a ballooning old tarpaulin spread to an up ended oar. Oley steered with another oar stuck out through the sculling slot in the stern of the jouncing dory. The craft rode the waves like a gull, swooping along with ease, dry as a duck.

Far astern, the white mountain peaks of the Shumagin Islands and the grim, snow mantled barrier of the mainland showed dimly as the seas lifted the blue boat high.

"I wish we had some blankets," chattered Gumboot, shivering on the midship thwart.

"We'll get to warmer weather soon," replied Oley. "We forgot one of the water casks, too."

"An' we got no compass," exclaimed Gumboot.

"We'll steer by the swell," Oley declared. "And we can see the stars sometimes."

They kept the high northwesterly swell under their stern on cloudy days and nights; in clear weather they held a course by the sun and the North Star. They lived peacefully in the blue boat, making a hundred miles a day. The Cape Cod dory was a splendid sea craft; it rode the roughest waves without shipping a drop of water. But Oley and Gumboot suffered from cold in the little boat—of a night they shivered continually. They were short of water too, and doled it out to each other sparingly.

Once the wind blew a gale; the gnashing seas struck angrily astern of the fleeing dory, throwing it skyward with dizzying glee, dropping it breathlessly into vast hollows.

But the two old sailors held to their steering oar, their corner of tarpaulin bulging, their seamy faces smiling into the winds and sea.

THE PILOT boat on the San Francisco bar spotted a blue object with a stump of an oar and a piece of blackened canvas, off to seaward. They sailed toward it and stared down in astonishment at the two weather browned and leathery faced old sailors in the bobbing little tub.

"Shipwrecked, hey?" yelled the skipper of the pilot boat, running up into the wind, close alongside them.

"No—shanghaied," explained Oley.

"Shanghaied!" exclaimed the pilot boat skipper.

"In Alaska," continued Oley.

"In Alaska!" echoed the skipper on the white hulled pilot boat, his jaw dropping. He stared at the blue dory and a look of recognition came into his face.

"You sail from the Shumagin fisheries?" he yelled.

"Ve didn't valk, by yiminy," retorted Gumboot Hansen.

"Great cripes—stand by for a line!" shouted the pilot captain.

"We don't want no line," growled Oley. "We're goin' in—we don't want to hang around here on the bar!"

"You may get blown off," said the man on the pilot boat.

"You got a plug of tobacco?" inquired Oley.

A white uniformed sailor on the larger craft pulled out a square of the black sticky delicacy and tossed it over into the dory.

"T'anks," said Oley, taking it up and biting off a big chunk, and then handing the rest over to Gumboot. "So long."

"Well, I'll be damned!" ejaculated the pilot boat skipper.

The two sailors brought their dory toward the sea wall at North Beach. In the meantime, the pilot boat had sent in a story by wireless of the exploit of the two old salts, and a half dozen reporters attacked them in a big yellow launch a short distance from the pierhead. The newspapermen set up a battery of cameras, greatly to the indignation and fright of Oley and Gumboot. They refused all offers of a tow and got to the sea wall where they were plied with questions.

"Sure we come from Alaska," said Oley. "Wolf Holkey tried to make us fish, but ve don't like fishin', so ve left."

The reporters wrote up the story and the next morning it was in all the papers, to the considerable irritation of the Pacific Codfish Company, although the firm's name was not directly mentioned.

And then Oley ran into Barnacle Johnson on the waterfront.

"I still got that ark in San Diego, Oley," he said. "I'll make it seventy dollars to you."

"I ain't got no seventy tollars," replied Oley, glumly. And he sounded with his large paws deep into his empty pockets.

BUT THAT very afternoon Oley and Gumboot entered the shaky door of the ramshackle building on Clay Street that housed the Pacific Codfish Company. A strong briny odor of salt cod pervaded the place. In the rear, piles of kenched fish showed conspicuously. Oley sniffed and Gumboot scowled.

The front portion of the ancient and dingy looking establishment was walled off with glass partitions for the office force, who worked in a perpetual salty atmosphere. A little, hawk faced man came up to Oley and Gumboot.

"What you want—to ship out on a codfishing schooner?" he demanded.

"We want to see th' boss," replied Oley.

"I'm the boss," snapped the other.

Oley shook his head.

"I want to talk to th' boss," he repeated, loudly.

"What you want to see him for?"

"You never mind," growled Oley. "You tell him Gentleman Oley and Gumboot Hansen whose pict'ers is in th' paper is here an' he better come out."

At that all the office force looked up and stared. Instantly they recognized the two old sailors whose pictures they had seen that morning.

"You!" gasped the little hawk faced man, starting back. "You and your infernal yarn! How do you think we're going to get men to ship, after this?"

At this moment another leaner, older and still more hawk faced man in a weedy black suit came out and stood scowling at Oley and Gumboot.

"Well?" he snapped.

"Lookey here," said Oley, rolling up to him. "Your Wolf Holkey an' that other feller up dar shanghaied us. We losed our clo's an' we had a tough time. We want to be paid off for our codfishing."

"Did you have much fish?" queried the head of the Pacific Codfish Company.

"Plenty," said Oley.

"You'll have to wait for the records to come down," said the hawk faced codfish magnate, sourly.

"Lookey here," said Oley. "I know somet'ing about th' wreck of th' *Serena* an' this insurance business. That feller Holkey took a lot of salt an' gear off. You don't reported it to th' insurance, I guess. Mebbe we go an' tell somet'ing. Gol dog!"

The man started guiltily. He and the lesser hawk faced clerk glanced at each other furtively. Obviously, Oley had struck into forbidden and tender ground. The chief of the Pacific Codfish Company looked around the office hastily and drew his skinny fingers across his thin lips. Oley and Gumboot had shown too much capacity for getting publicity already.

"How much do you want?" he demanded, abruptly.

"Eighty tollar apiece," replied Oley.

And a few minutes later, with four stiff twenty dollar bills in his old gnarled hand, Oley was back on the waterfront. The first thing he did was to look up Barnacle Johnson.

"I take th' ark, Barnacle," he said, producing three of the bills. "Sixty tollars cash."

"All right," said Barnacle Johnson. "But I thought you had no money."

"I yust got paid off from my Alaska fishin'," explained Oley. "Sixteen codfish an' three sculpins. Gol dog!"

Continuing

KING *of the* WORLD

By TALBOT MUNDY

THREE of us heard Meldrum Strange, that eccentric billionaire whose world-wide financial interests kept his nose eternally sniffing the winds of strange events, name the man who was responsible for the exploding of the French cruiser in Marseilles harbor.

"Dorje—?" James Schuyler Grim, that American soldier of fortune known the world over as Jimgrim, repeated curiously. And Strange exploded:

"A half mad inventive genius who believes himself a reincarnation of Solomon and plans to become King of the World by his diabolical inventions. He must be found!"

At that Grim turned to me, Major Robert Crosby, and Jeff Ramsden, his tank-like companion in adventure, with—

"Gentlemen, I'm taking this case."

A little later the first of Dorje's agents threw herself across our path: the woman who called herself the Princess Baltis—in reality a very clever international spy—who claimed to remember past lives with both Grim and Dorje. Playing on her vanity, Grim secured information that led us to Cairo, where he was met by allies in past adventures: Chullunder Ghose, the preposterously fat *babu* whose mental agility was little less than that of

himself; and Colonel McGowan of the British army.

Cairo was in a ferment. Cables from all over the world were flashing in, telling of the destruction of ships and arsenals; tumbling money rates and the burning of harvests in their warehouses. Soon, inevitably, the entire world would be in the grip of stark terror.

Grim made his first offensive move. He led us to the Great Pyramid of Gizeh, which we found to be a rendezvous for Dorje's cutthroat agents, in charge of one Bertolini. There was a fierce hand-to-hand encounter which we—Jeff leading—won. Under duress, Bertolini revealed two important facts: that Dorje was believed to be in Chak-sam, in Tibet; and the secret of his tremendous world power depended upon a perfected system of mental telepathy, of which Bertolini was a key man. Later that night we ran down a cache of Dorje's "thunderbolts"—the dreaded explosive principle used in his orgy of destruction. With them he intended to wipe out Cairo. By means of searchlight rays we exploded them harmlessly.

Back in Cairo we proceeded immediately to Bertolini's house. The place bristled with armed men, waiting for us; and it was only by the lucky discovery of several flasks of the gas Dorje called "death's breath" that we were able to clean out that rats' nest. His bodyguard destroyed, Bertolini broke badly as he was about to divulge the complete secret of Dorje's cipher. Suddenly he collapsed, shuddered and died. Baltis had killed him with some quick, concentrated poison.

Then it was that Grim decided that Dorje should be brought out into the open; and he determined to use Baltis, whom he could hang for murder, to do the trick.

With McGowan's aid, he devised a plan for the woman's escape to Delhi in a French plane, arranging to arrive well ahead of her with the knowledge that she would seek out Dorje as quickly as possible . . .

In Delhi Chullunder Ghose discovered

one Hari Kobol Das, a renegade scholar who, in the past, had tricked him out of ancient Sanskrit manuscripts on thought transference, to be working in the office of the British Intelligence. Apprised of that fact by the *babu*, Grim went to wise old Benjamin, from whose dark trade rooms all adventure trails led in that part of the world.

"Who is Hari Kobol Das?" he asked.

"That rat! Never trust him, Jimgrim. The spy of Vasantasena, the cleverest courtesan in Delhi!"

"Get word to Kobol Das," said Grim, "that Dorje is here! Tonight we go to Vasantasena's. Chullunder Ghose, you will be 'Ahnon Mirza', Persian merchant. Be there!"

CHAPTER XXX

"Dorje is in Delhi!"

HARI KOBOL DAS turned out to be a Hindu of the kind who wear second hand London suits that have been sold to dealers by the valets of extravagant young men of fashion. He was considerably over fifty years of age and would have looked much less incongruous in one of Gandhi's cotton caps and shorts. Clean shaven, he attempted to look twenty-five in spite of gold rimmed spectacles and a wrinkled forehead that bulged like that of a professor from the American funnies; and he wore a straw hat perched a trifle to one side that made him look more like a dark Goanese than a Hindu. He carried a cane with which he slapped his striped pants. And he was obviously nervous.

Grim and I observed him through two knot holes in the rear wall of Benjamin's dim office. Chullunder Ghose had been arrayed an hour ago in gorgeous silks and had departed through the back door. Jeff had gone to the Royal Air Force hangar to get news, if he could, of the progress of the French plane that was bringing Baltis. Benjamin was in a mood that Hari Kobol Das was at a loss to understand.

"You owe me money, Hari Kobol Das. Why don't you pay me?"

"Why do you speak to me in English?"

"Because you wear English clothes. You look so like an Englishman that I feel you ought to pay your debts, as all English gentlemen do."

"Is that why you sent for me?"

"Yes. It is three years since I lent you money and you have never even paid the interest. Nevertheless, you appear to expect me to keep on giving you secret news, so that you may go to your employer and pretend to be a good spy—whereas, as a matter of fact, you are only a poor pretender. *Tschey-yey!* You believe you can make a quail win fights by sending thoughts into its head! And you have lost my money betting on such imbecility. Pay me, if you want the secret that I know now."

"You have news? Better tell me, Benjamin, or I will tell the general some things about you that will—"

Benjamin acted perfectly. He exploded. He gave a word-and-gesture-perfect imitation of an old Jew terrified by threats and tantalized by inability to get his money back. He rose out of his chair and trembled. He appeared to attempt to recover his dignity. He muttered Hebrew phrases. He began to speak a dozen times, and checked himself. He sat down, glaring over his spectacles.

"And is this gratitude?" he asked.

"Gratitude is the humiliating vice of unimportant people," remarked Hari Kobol Das, who had apparently been memorizing modern phrases. "You had better tell your news, unless you wish to be investigated."

"But if I tell you—?"

"I will protect you. I stand very high in my department."

"Dorje is in Delhi!"

"Incredible!"

"But you must not tell any one except your general!"

"How do you know?"

"I saw him. I have spoken with him."

"Where?"

"Here."

"When?"

"This afternoon."

"What does he look like?"

"He is of medium height, but looks big. He looks as if he might be Chinese, Afghan, Irish and American Indian all in one. He has big eyes that can suddenly grow small, and a small mouth that can suddenly grow big, particularly when he laughs. He has a nose that looks as if it smells the history and the meaning of everything on any wind. And he carries his head like a woman who brings water from the well."

"That is Dorje! But how was he dressed?"

Benjamin answered eagerly.

"On his finger was a gold ring in the form of coiling serpents that hold an uncut ruby in their coils. He wore the hood and kirtle of a Ringding Gelong Lama from Tibet."

"That is Dorje!"

"Do you know Vasantasena?"

"Yes. You know I know her."

"I advise you not to mention it to her at all."

"Why?"

"I don't trust her. I would tell the general if I were you."

"Would you? I don't believe you. Else, why not tell the general yourself and get the credit for it? I believe you play a trick on me. You wish to prove to Dorje that I am unfit to be trusted. I shall certainly tell Vasantasena, because if Dorje is in Delhi there are going to be some killings and I do not choose to be a victim. If you are not careful I will tell Vasantasena that you sent for me to persuade me to betray Dorje."

"No, no, no! Oh, no!" said Benjamin. "Not that! That you may get some credit for yourself I tell you something—and you betray me?"

"Well, be careful. If I catch you withholding information, I will certainly report you both to the general and to Dorje!"

He smiled conceitedly. He posed as a person who might tell a great deal if he chose to.

WHEN he had gone, and the door of the great gloomy shop was closed behind him, Grim and I came out of hiding and Benjamin said what he thought.

"You are crazy, Jimgrim! I have done what you demanded, but I tell you that fool will go to Vasantasena straightway, and he will tell her Dorje is in Delhi. She knows Dorje. She has seen him. She is like all important courtesans; she has a horde of spies, like rats, who run her errands. She is a clearing house of secrets, a schemer, a power in Delhi—and a woman of great intelligence. She will pump that fool as dry of information as a dead bat. And the next thing you know, she will be sending peeled eyes, and tickled ears, and curious noses to visit this place!"

"We won't put her to all that trouble," Grim answered. "I want a Ringding Gelong Lama's outfit. Have you one?"

"Yes. But I might as well give you a shroud. You will be detected instantly. You will be stabbed and they will throw you, shroud and all, into a rat pit. What the rats leave of your bones they will probably send in a bag to the general's office with the compliments of Shiva!"

"Sort me out a Kashgari trader's kit for Jeff. He can talk that language perfectly to any one except a man from Kashgar."

"And for Major Crosby, I suppose, a *nautch* girl's costume! Jimgrim, you have lost your senses. You will go to Vasantasena? Then I bid you goodby. You will never see tomorrow's sunrise!"

Jeff came, dropped at the front door by a hooting auto that belonged to the Royal Air Force, driven by a subaltern to whom intrigue was as incomprehensible as speed and bombs were sweetly reasonable logic. Jeff had all the news he went for.

"Baltis gets here any time. The French plane turns out to be a record beater. They've wirelessed that they're running short of gas and may not quite reach Delhi, but they're due, if they can carry on, about nine-thirty. The Air Force has a squadron looking for them.

"All right, Crosby, you go 'as is'." Grim stared at me thoughtfully. "Your story is that Baltis is in need of medical attention. You are one of her gang. You're the doctor she trained in Paris to be sent to the United States to do a little strategic poisoning of key men like the President and the chief of staff and a few of the hot men in the secret service. You were sent here to replenish the supply of vegetable poison. Go to the hotel and wait for her, but don't let her see you until Benjamin's daughter has told her Dorje is in Delhi. Then tackle her and refuse to be shaken off. I think we're right in guessing that Vasantasena is the hook-up between Dorje and his agents. If so, Baltis' first move will prove it."

"But suppose she heads off somewhere else?" I objected. "How let you know?"

Grim laughed.

"Baltis will be shadowed by the general's experts from the second she steps out of the plane until she gives them the slip—and that won't happen too soon. Stick to her—and don't show fight, whatever happens. If you're trapped, we'll come and get you."

So I left them disguising themselves with the aid of the protesting Benjamin, who pulled out garment after garment from chests and drawers and lockers, rejecting this, selecting that, and even choosing perfumes for them.

I NEVER saw Benjamin's daughter until nearly ten o'clock that evening. Baltis came to the hotel escorted by an Air Force officer, who insisted on ordering cocktails and tried to amuse her —I suppose to give the spies time to take up tactical positions; I saw none of the spies, but he took his leave quite suddenly, so I suppose some one made him a signal. Immediately after that, Benjamin's daughter turned up, looking like a middle aged *ayah*. She was followed by a porter carrying a suitcase, but she took that from him when she reached the door of Baltis' room; and when she knocked she was admitted instantly, Baltis probably supposing she was some one sent by the authorities to play servant and act as a spy.

I gave them fifteen minutes to get acquainted. Then I went to the door and met Benjamin's daughter already on her way out, but without the suitcase. They had been quick. Baltis was already arrayed in Indian costume and both her hands were full of native Indian jewelry that Benjamin had sent along with the clothing; otherwise, she would have locked the door in my face. She was as pleased to see me as a bird to see a tomcat, but I forced my way in, so she made the best of it; but there was murder in her eye.

She had risen to the occasion—recovered all her natural, ebullient impudence. Hope, I suppose, had sprung triumphant in her at the thought of being met by one of Dorje's agents with a suitable supply of clothing and the news that Dorje was in Delhi.

"Where is Jeemgreem?" she demanded.

"He asked me to meet you and not to lose sight of you."

She nodded, studying herself, and I think me also, in a full length mirror while she tried on Benjamin's jewelry—astonishing, barbaric stuff that suited her perfectly. By the time she had made her choice of necklaces, anklets, bracelets she was like a *kouri* of an Oriental dream; and when she had done smiling at herself she turned on me with a look of candid triumph.

"You will do what Jeemgreem says. I know that. And you are sent to spy on me because Jeemgreem hopes I will communicate with Dorje. I know that also. And you know I am not fr-r-iendly; if I should pretend to be so, you would not believe. So I will be fr-r-ank. I will tell you the plain truth."

I supposed a thumping lie was coming, but I was mistaken. Grim's method, I think, had undermined her self-confidence to the point where she ceased to calculate the odds but bet her last stake on one forlorn hope.

"Jeemgreem had his chance to be my fr-r-iend. But he spur-r-ned it; and he

tr-r-eated me as I do not choose that any man shall tr-r-eat my offer of myself. I am against him, as he shall presently discover! As for you, you keyhole peepaire, I will shoot you deader than a *mouton* if you disobey me!"

She had stolen one of the Air Force automatics—and she did not make the amateur's mistake of holding it so far in front of her that I could kick it or knock it upward.

"I am not afraid to make a noise. I only need to get away from here. Before they shall have come and found your body, I will be out of that window and gone to where all the police in the world can nevaire find me!"

Benjamin, it seemed, had done much more than send her a convenient disguise. She evidently knew where she was going and how to get there.

"My orders," I said, "are to go wherever you go. But I am not to interfere."

She nodded.

"This is a city where a woman looks less noticeable if she has an escort. Get out through that window, down the fire escape; go to the end of the garden and wait for me beside the door in the wall. And if the door is locked, find some one who will open it."

I OBEYED. I knew she could not escape through the hotel without being followed by government spies; and it seemed a reasonably sane idea to make her think I was afraid of her—as, in fact, I was; I was sure she intended to shoot if I should even hesitate. And Grim had most emphatically asked me not to show fight; I had that excuse with which to salve a somewhat chastened vanity.

The garden was a tawdry quarter of an acre, with a chair or two for after-dinner cigarets and sad geraniums in red pots flanking a red brick path that radiated stored heat like a baker's oven. I was probably seen; an Indian night has more eyes than its sky has stars; but it was nothing to stir more than idle curiosity that a *sahib* should use the fire escape to reach the garden. The door at the end of the garden opened when I touched the latch. I waited and saw the light go out in Baltis' room.

A minute later, walking, looking like an *ayah* shrouded in a cheap black *sari* that shadowed her face and made her look bulky and misshapen, she followed me; and I don't doubt she was also seen. But there was certainly nothing wrong about an *ayah* leaving by the back way, and if the secret service spotted her, and followed, then they did it so adroitly that I saw no hint of it. I opened the door in the wall and passed through ahead of her. She closed it.

"I will shoot you dead unless you do exactly what I say!"

There was a taxi standing with its motor idling, clocking up the rupees, six feet from the garden gate. The driver leaned out and opened the door. She jumped in.

"Hurry!" she commanded.

I followed and she ordered me to take the front seat, where she could keep me covered with the automatic.

The driver started without being told and drove two or three hundred yards before he asked for orders.

"Vasantasena!"

Evidently Benjamin had left our destination open to allow for Baltis having secret links with Dorje of which we knew nothing.

"See here," I said, "you throw that pistol through the window. I'm your doctor. I'm the man you trained, to send to the United States, to poison Presidents and other superfluous people. I have met you here in order to obtain supplies of vegetable poison that is deadly but leaves no detectible trace. That's Grim's story. You tell it."

She laughed.

"The only story you and Jeemgreem need is an obituary notice! *Your* last opportunity was in that hotel room. Yes, you are quite right—I no longer need this."

To my astonishment she leaned out then and dropped the automatic in

the shadow of a passing bullock cart.

"Now disobey me if you dare!"

I think she thought the taxi driver certainly was one of Dorje's men, and it was not my cue to disillusion her.

CHAPTER XXXI

"Grim seems to have dug up some one to ballyhoo him."

WE ARRIVED at a gate in a wall, where, even though it was almost midnight, jewelers and such-like people sat on mats beside their boxes in the yellow rays of several oil lamps on iron brackets. It was a rather wide gate, made of teak with iron studs, and there was an iron barred window in it, through which we were observed by some one who was in no haste to admit us. He gave the merchants ample time to pester us with offers of golden bracelets and I don't know what else, which they insisted would procure us "great consideration" in Vasantasena's salon.

I walked up to the grille in the gate and demanded, in Hindustani, in the name of nine abominable devils, why we were kept waiting; and I noticed that the merchants and their hangers-on kept at a discreet distance. There were probably government spies among them, but the spies undoubtedly already knew the rigmarole of word and counter-word; it would be impossible to keep such a formula secret from men who have nothing to do but ferret out such matters. Those who were not spies (if there is such a person in India) were careful to avoid the appearance of trying to listen.

The individual behind the gate suggested in excellent English that if I had nine devils with me I had better leave them outside. I remarked that, if so, nine would still remain to enter with me. Then I heard him unfasten the bolt of the gate, so I turned and helped Baltis get out of the taxi and we walked through, into a courtyard full of statuary, flanked on one side by the house and on two others by a garden wall.

The entrance to the house was in the left far corner; but between us and that there were obstacles in the form of not less than a dozen truculent appearing loafers in clean white clothing, who observed us with the air of watch dogs.

The man who had admitted us looked worse than any of them—bigger, uglier, less willing to be done out of an excuse for fighting. He demanded the *dasturi*, meaning the customary tip, so, seeing there were two of us, I gave him the equivalent of twenty dollars, which he tucked into his cummerbund so abruptly that I knew I had grossly overpaid him. However, he *salaamed* us, which was something, since it impressed the others, who lined themselves against the wall as we advanced. But when we had passed them they formed themselves into a group between us and the gate, so that it seemed a simpler matter to enter that courtyard than to escape from it, once inside.

There was not a glimmer of light from the house; such narrow windows as there were presented blank teak shutters to the night. And there was no electric light, presumably because Vasantasena did not choose to have her premises invaded by the electricians and inspectors. But there was a bright oil lantern above the house door, and beneath that stood a man who wore a Persian dagger tucked into his waistband. He had a scar on his face, and two fingers missing; he was handsome in a picaresque way but looked as tough as a rat pit terrier. He, too, demanded the *dasturi*. It began to be apparent how the expenses of such a household are provided. Luckily I had lots of money with me.

Then he asked me whether I would mind waiting forty-five minutes. I told him we would not wait one minute. He replied—

"If I can arrange to cancel the forty-five minute delay, how many minutes would your Honor be willing to wait?"

"Forty-five."

"Well, that will cost you forty-five rupees."

"Get it if you can, you robber!" I answered.

He grinned. He understood English perfectly. However, then he asked in Hindustani—

"Does your Honor count nine in the usual way?"

I hesitated, recalling the order of the numbers, not wishing to make a mistake; but Baltis thought I had forgotten. She piped up promptly, arrogantly:

"Eight—six—four—one—nine—seven—five—three—two! Now let us in, you whelp of forty-five dogs—you forty-five times spat-upon and cursed imbecile!"

SHE HAD a gift for doing unexpected things. She suddenly removed the voluminous, cheap, black cotton *sari* and stood resplendent in the lamplight, looking as native Indian as himself and lovelier than one imagines Bluebeard's women were.

She handed him the *sari*. Under cover of it possibly she exchanged some kind of secret signal with him. He immediately bowed and thumped the door with both hands, drumming at the same time with his fingers.

The door opened. Until it closed again behind us we could not see the woman who had backed away behind it into a sort of sentry box niche in the wall. She was an old woman, dressed from head to foot in crimson, rather wheezy, and extremely fussy with the lock, and bolt and strong brass chain. She finally swung a big iron bar in place that fitted into sockets in the masonry. There was no doubt we were locked in.

There was a short hall, then a teak stairway, steep, well lighted by about a dozen silver lamps with crimson shades, and carpeted an inch deep, so that footfalls made no sound whatever. On a landing at the stairhead, grouped against a gold striped, crimson curtain, there were three young women dressed as modestly as virgins. Their gestures were also discreet and modest.

Baltis went upstairs ahead of me. She was at the top in a moment, whispering to a girl.

To right and left of the gold and crimson curtain there were full length mirrors, framed in painted wood that had been carved with suitably obscene but legendary, more or less symbolic figurines in very high relief; and I detected human eyes that peered through the dark interstices.

I could hear giggling, too, but it was suppressed as if it was intended to be heard but only discreetly noticed; it produced an atmosphere of unchaste mystery, increased by the muffled sounds of string and wood-wind music rhythmically punctuated by a muted drum.

Baltis vanished through the gold and crimson curtain, spirited away by one of the three girls. I followed, but I was held back for a moment by the other two, who stood straight in my way and laughed, not yielding until the curtain had done swaying.

Then I stepped through into a perfect maze of curtains, with mirrors between them that multiplied confusion, and there was no knowing which way to turn until another woman stepped out from behind a mirror, beckoning and smiling as if I were her long lost lover home at last with half a *lakh* of rupees itching to be squandered on her.

She beckoned and I followed, but I felt about as comfortable as an infidel on the way to be examined by the Holy Inquisition.

Not a sign of Baltis. An amazing curtain, figured with all the colors of the prism, moved on a rod and revealed a passage lined with carved wood panels, lighted by colored lamps that gave the walls a soft, warm glow. There was a door on the left.

My guide opened it and, when I hesitated, tried to push me through, smiling persuasively as if she thought we understood no words in common. It was a small room. There was a hag in there who had no teeth and looked as if she might have rheumatism—lockers, shelves, drawers and a couple of chests on the floor against the wall. One chair. Nothing noticeably dangerous. I walked slowly in.

MY GUIDE said something in an undertone. The hag immediately drew forth from a locker a voluminous long cloak of maroon silk lined with peach colored satin. She threw it over my shoulders. I was urged to sit down. In a moment the hag had my shoes off and provided me with soft peach colored slippers that had pointed toes, and figures stamped all over them. I was offered a turban and refused it. I was offered a fez and refused that. But they took away my straw hat and that was the last I ever saw of it. A girl came, probably not more than ten years old, apparently as timid as a mouse but quite as acquisitive looking, who hung two long garlands of flower buds around my neck. I was told then in good plain English that it was time to pay the usual *dasturi;* and when I produced some money I could almost feel their eyes weighing my wallet, so I used a little sleight-of-hand trick that is well worth practising and stowed it away in one pocket while they thought I put it in another.

"Where is the Sahiba Baltis?" I demanded.

That appeared to be the signal to conduct me into deeper mysteries. My guide apparently forgot that she understood English. She resumed her gesturing, inviting me to follow her. She led along the passage to a shut door at the far end. There was a grille. She knocked and some one opened the grille half an inch or so. We waited, and again the grille opened. Whispers. Then a sudden burst of louder music as the door swung wide into a passage that turned sharp to the left and opened without any other door into a long, high ceilinged room.

The first person I saw was Chullunder Ghose. He looked drunk, lolling on a deep divan that faced the entrance, and he was being entertained by—rather, he was entertaining half a dozen dancing girls. There were two beside him on the divan; two were on the cushions near his feet; and one was bringing him a tray with glasses on it; they were laughing at his jokes, and one of them had pulled the turban down over his eyes, which made him look peculiarly rakish and amused them almost to hysterics. He was acting his part superbly.

There were at least two dozen other dancing women in the room, most of them older than those who were making merry with Chullunder Ghose, but none of them dressed more puritanically than a Broadway chorus girl. However, they were behaving quietly. As I entered, half a dozen of them started a sort of group dance in the middle of the floor; and though they were well trained, and seemed to enjoy it, there was nothing about it to make even a tourist think he was immersed in India's sin.

The music was behind a screen of lacily carved sandalwood. Around three sides of the room there were divans spaced at regular intervals, and nearly all of them were occupied by men of various races, who gave me one glance and then watched the dancing in the sort of sullen mood in which impatient people await events of more importance.

There was in all that strange gathering very little conversation although the girls were trying to start some and a group of three were closing in on one grim Afghan looking person with the evident intention of stirring him out of his gloom.

No sign of Baltis. I recalled her boast that all Grim needed now, and I too, was an obituary notice. No sign of Grim. No Jeff.

On my right, at the end of the room, was a dais, not remotely unlike one of those high beds of state on which royalty used to sleep; only the curtains were draped from a balcony that overhung the dais and extended from wall to wall. On the right hand of the dais, in the teak wall, was a door. The balcony was something like a choir loft in a small church; its timbers were richly carved, and I could see that there were two doors at the back, and one at the end, half hidden by heavy curtains. The unventilated room was as hot as Tophet.

THE STRANGE thing was that no one appeared to object to my presence. My guide motioned me to an unoccupied divan not far from the door and then went away, smirking a bit mysteriously but not, so far as I could detect, speaking or signaling to any one. A young girl with an almost white skin and a perfume that suggested rose leaves in an ancient Persian jar set a small, low table before me and brought a cool, colored drink in a tall glass. Another girl brought coffee. Then they both sat down on cushions near me and appeared to wonder what to do to entertain this barbarian. They smirked at each other and stared at me when they thought I was not observing them.

Chullunder Ghose seemed not to notice me at all so I took my cue from him. He appeared to me to be the only person in the room, except the half dozen girls whom he was keeping in gales of giggles, who was not waiting in impatient boredom for something to happen.

A Pathan two seats away on my left seemed actually savagely indignant at delay and when a good looking girl approached him he sent her away with a stinging reprimand; it brought a retort from her that almost fetched him to his feet and for a second I thought there was going to be murder. However, he simmered down, and the girl joined the two who were studying me.

I counted the men in the room. Including myself and Chullunder Ghose there were nineteen of us, of whom four were gambling in a sort of alcove by themselves and two were smiling cynically as they turned the pages of an illustrated book.

The only weapon in sight was a dagger; I could see its hilt protruding from the waistband of a Mongolian looking person who was dressed like a Cossack, high *kaftan* and all. He sat cross-cornerwise from the Pathan and watched him; I believe it was his presence that prevented the Pathan from springing at the girl who had traded an atrocious insult for a fierce rebuke.

He looked relieved when a woman came through the door beside the dais and beckoned the Pathan, who arose and followed her, swaggering in a way that suggested he was not so sure of himself as he seemed. As the door closed behind him I thought I heard scuffling and a thud, but a burst of music almost at the same moment made it impossible to be sure.

However, I noticed that the four men who were gambling glanced at one another nervously and the Mongolian looking person in the *kaftan* smiled.

Not many minutes after that, Jeff entered by the same door near the dais. He looked enormous in his Kashgar clothing. He might have stepped out of an Oriental story book. He thrilled the dancing girls, who clustered around him chattering like birds in an aviary, and it was astonishing to see how perfectly he played his part—no ladies' man but an excellent actor—tipping them appropriate small sums "to say a prayer for him", "to remember him in their dreams", "to bestow on the poor in the name of gratitude for pleasant hours"; a suitable remark to each, that served its purpose.

Evidently Jeff knew all the ropes. They let him alone, he having disgorged a just proportion of the overhead.

I saw him exchange glances with Chullunder Ghose. He then approached me and bowed profoundly, talking loudly in the Kashgar dialect as if he knew I understood it but which, of course, I did not. But between the stately, sonorous sentences he interspersed plain English.

"Baltis raising hell—in there with Vasantasena—invite me to sit down with you, you damned fool!—"

So I acted as well as I could the part of a rather patronizing British official who had chanced to meet him in the Kashgar country, and after he had gone through all the rigmarole of modestly declining such an honor he sat beside me on the divan. Then, until he was quite sure no one overheard us, he continued to lavish polite speeches on me, which I answered in a low voice in English, telling him all

that had happened since I left him at Benjamin's.

JEFF'S voice grew more and more subdued until he, too, spoke English; but even then, at intervals, he interspersed it with louder remarks in the Kashgar dialect for the benefit of dancing girls who kept on passing to and fro.

"My own opinion is that Grim has—*buyerda tukhe-sutdin bilak hama nersa talaledur*—my opinion is that Grim has balled it badly this time. He has announced himself as Dorje and demanded a room to himself where he will send for all and sundry when it suits him. Vasantasena is in a fine stew.

"Baltis got to her—I suppose she knew all about her before she left France—*sai buida tort tufak tortilarsi kok tufak*—and as plain as a pike staff she's taking a seat on the fence, so that she can jump off either way: denounce Grim or support him, depending on whether Grim indorses her or not.

"She gave Vasantasena nearly all that jewelry that Benjamin supplied. They're as thick as thieves already, sitting on one dais and exchanging compliments—*yollgha tushgan patikdin panah berghil, Khudayim . . .*"

I glanced up. I think it was Chullunder Ghose's face, across the room, that made me do it.

"Grim is probably exploring," Jeff went on. But suddenly he, too, noticed the *babu's* attitude and glanced as I had done toward the balcony above the dais.

There had appeared a face—a face and shoulders, elbows resting on the railing of the balcony, long fingers so exactly underneath the chin that they suggested something horrible that grew where normally a beard might be. A monstrously impressive face, as handsome as the devil; no more Oriental than it might be Irish, English, French, German or Scandinavian; no more European than it might be Hindu, Mongolian, Turkoman or even Chinese. It was a racial blend, made humorous, mysterious and terrible by crimson lamplight shining upward, and by shadow, and by the suggestive, graceless grins of two Tibetan devil masks that hung beneath it, one on either hand, on the balcony panels.

The face spoke, and it brought the whole room to startled silence. Even music ceased. The voice had a strange, dull quality, as if emotion were something long ago forgotten and only will remained. But the voice filled the room and the syllables were as distinct as one, two, three. I heard my own name, mispronounced.

"What is he saying?" I asked Jeff.

"The Lord Dorje the Daring commands the immediate presence of Ahnon Mirza, Said Akhun (that's myself) and Major Crosby. Let's go. Grim seems to have dug up some one to ballyhoo him."

But I think Jeff felt the kind of premonition I did. And I know Chullunder Ghose turned gray beneath his weathered ivory skin.

CHAPTER XXXII

"Dorjel"

THERE was a sensation—tension—as we three strode toward the center of the room. The face had vanished, leaving behind the same sort of effect that a monster might produce by peering, head and shoulders, from a pond and then submerging. There were the ripples. What was it? The dancing girls were awe struck and as suddenly quiet as birds that have seen the shadow of a hawk—until the music resumed; then one of them laughed and they all joined in, not knowing why. That gave us opportunity to speak. Chullunder Ghose tried to control his voice, but it came in a scared whisper, and there was sweat on his jowls.

"Rammy sahib, have you seen the garden? There is something there that the girls think is Indra's chariot. They are forbidden to look, so they have all peeped. They are forbidden to speak of it, so they told me."

"Grim got wind of it," Jeff answered.

"That's why he wanted a room to himself. Maybe he has contrived to see it."

"It has neither wings nor wheels," said the *babu*.

"Get a move on," Jeff insisted, "and wake up, *babu-ji*. Let's overlook no bets."

They were already dancing again, in several groups in front of the seated menfolk, and the dance was neither so restrained nor decent as it had been. But that was obviously done to disguise a very different excitement. We were watched, as we walked to the door beside the dais, by every eye in the room. As we passed through the door and I closed it behind us there began a buzz of conversation, blended with the music and the clash of anklets and the rhythmic thump of bare feet.

We found ourselves in a low, wide passage, lighted by one lamp. There was a door in front of us and a door on our left.

"Straight ahead," said Jeff. But Chullunder Ghose's wits were functioning in spite of fear.

"There might be a window here," he remarked. "That business of overlooking bets is why Napoleon lost Waterloo!"

He tried the left hand door and, being a native of that land, he knew the likely ways to open it. He groped, found something, pressed, pulled. The door moved inward, and the lamplight shone into a bare room not much larger than a good sized closet. On the floor, face upward, lay the Pathan. He was gagged. His arms were tied. A knife—his own, it might be —stuck hilt upward from his throat, and they had spread his coat neatly beneath him to prevent the blood from staining the floor.

"Women did that," said the *babu*. "Men would have spoiled a curtain or a carpet. They were experts. See how the edge of the blade is upward? Amateurs strike edge down. I am all in favor of annihilating the Pathans, but what had this one done, I wonder."

He was about to stoop over the body to look. Jeff seized him by the shoulder, too late. Before he could get that door shut, the other door at the end of the passage opened and two women stood there, smiling. One, obviously, at the first glance, was Vasantasena; she was wearing some of the jewelry that Benjamin had sent for Baltis, but even without that there could have been no doubt of her identity.

She was not young. She may have been forty-five or fifty years old. But she had the kind of ageless spirit in her that Salome may have had, that makes maturity more alluring and much deadlier than youth, because more interesting and alert with calculated guile. She had become an artist.

SHE SPOKE English with an accent which suggested that she knew too many languages to speak even one of them thoroughly well. I have no idea why she spoke to me, unless it was because I was so obviously not an Oriental and was therefore probably less easy than the others to tie to her chariot wheel. She looked like a woman who would inevitably tackle difficulties first.

"You mock my enemy? You admire his happening? But I prefer you should mind your own business. Yes?"

"When in doubt," said Jeff out of the corner of his mouth to me, "go forward." And he led the way. Then, aloud, to her, in the sort of guttural and toothy Hindustani that a man from Kashgar speaks, "The Lord Dorje sent for us."

"For me also," she answered. "If I should tell him it was you who slew that Orakzai Pathan, perhaps he may reward you. Who knows? Or he may take pity on the poor dead homeless one and send you to keep him company. Let us go and inquire."

She led the way, along another passage, to the right. The other woman was a mere mute sycophant with scandalized, serious eyes, who opened and shut doors and did her best to make us feel we were in the presence of might and mystery. She ushered and fussed us all into a room whose wooden walls were covered with astonishingly painted indiscretions of smiling gods and gazelle eyed goddesses.

At one end was a dais heaped with cushions, and beyond it was a door. Above the dais was another balcony, exactly like the one in the room we had left. Shaped something like a horseshoe, and extending around two-thirds of the room, its center exactly opposite the dais, was a deep lounge, also heaped with cushions. At the end that faced the dais there were windows concealed by painted iron shutters and embroidered curtains. There were many little tables; only one bright lamp, that looked like gold encrusted with precious stones, suspended by gold chains from the ceiling.

Grim sat on the dais, cross-legged. He was dressed in a brown Tibetan cloak, like a monk. But it was lined with scarlet silk that rather softened the face of austerity, and he wore a golden girdle. Benjamin had stained and rubbed his skin until it looked like leather.

With a gesture he signified that we might take our places on the horseshoe lounge. Vasantasena, solemn as a priestess, set us the example, but as she led the way I thought her back suggested laughter and excitement, and I know Chullunder Ghose did.

"Sahib," he whispered, "Jimmy Jimgrim is in Dutch damn desperately now. Believe me. Go and talk to him. As European you can not be expected to have any manners. Go now."

So instead of following Vasantasena I turned back toward the dais.

"Chief," I said aloud, "I have a message for you."

"Speak low," he commanded, in Hindustani. So I whispered—

"Chullunder Ghose believes we're trapped."

"I think so, too," he answered.

"They murdered a Pathan—"

"I know that. There is nothing to be done but carry on and see what happens. If you get the opportunity, tell Jeff he's not to try to rescue me. I've seen something, through a window. If I disappear, you fellows try to follow, but don't try to keep me from getting killed, or any rot like that."

I think he would have said more, but Baltis entered—through the door on the right of the dais facing the one that we had used. And she was no longer the victim of Grim's indifference. Demurely, but with confidence and laughter in her eyes, she climbed on to the dais and arranged a heap of cushions near him so that she might lie on her elbows and study his face. She spoke low, but I overheard her.

"Jeemgreem, if you love me you shall live—not otherwise!"

She was excited. She looked like a refinanced gambler staking all her new resources on one throw. I think her plan was to persuade Grim to escape that minute, although she afterward insisted that she had no plan whatever, but was trusting to the inspiration of a moment. Or, she may have intended murder; she was capable of that.

She began to whisper to Grim, and in his rôle of Dorje he could hardly object to her laying a hand on his shoulder. Had not Dorje as many wives as Solomon? And has a wife no privilege?

Vasantasena called me and I faced about. She beckoned. I resented it; and I wanted to make sure that Baltis should not draw a knife and drive it into Grim's heart. But there was that message to Jeff, who was seated near Vasantasena, and he made a motion with his hand for me to come and sit beside him. Then I noticed an expression on Chullunder Ghose's face—horror again. He was looking upward at the balcony, which I could not see from where I stood. Perplexed, I decided to go and tell Jeff what Grim said; and as I took my place beside him, he and I together saw the face the *babu* had already seen.

IT WAS the same we had seen in the first room, in exactly the same attitude. This time, though, he did not speak; he vanished. And before I had finished giving Jeff Grim's message the door on the right of the dais opened. It opened wide. Some one in the gloom beyond the door

was examining the room. A dull voice made an exclamation—one word. Then the owner of the face came striding in and some one closed the door behind him. Baltis almost shrieked; I saw her seize Grim's arm, and Grim shook himself free. Vasantasena chuckled. It was like the noise of poison bubbling in a cauldron.

"Bow to the Lord Dorje," said Vasantasena, awkwardly, in English.

The newcomer faced Grim and bowed. I thought he rather overdid it. Then he stepped to one side of the dais and faced us all. He had his hands behind him and he stood like a man too used to power to assert his own authority—his feet apart, shoulders a trifle stooping, big head hanging forward—strong, lean, dressed like Grim, except that this man's cloak and hood were lined with yellow and not scarlet silk. The hood was thrown back, showing a crisp crop of short black hair.

"Who are you?" Grim asked, speaking English too. I think Grim knew already.

"I *was* Dorje!"

Silence, for about a second. Then a gasp from Baltis. She began to speak to him in rapid French. Instead of answering, he pointed at her with one finger of his left hand and then swung his arm in the direction of the lounge where we sat. She obeyed him; and when she had sat down near me he spoke to her in English in his dull, disinterested voice:

"You failed. And your sister (he pronounced it shishter) let the cipher out (he pronounced it shypher). Do not lie to me."

"Dorje—" she began.

"You know what you get," he interrupted.

Then he turned toward Grim, and he and Grim observed each other for several seconds.

"It would be usheless," he said presently, "to try to kill me. I am well protected."

"Probably," said Grim.

"Am I to take your name, since you have taken mine? I like mine better. They have spelled yours to me. Jinkrin?"

"Jim Grim."

"Grim, eh? Libra, sun in Taurus, moon in Aries—born, I dareshay, probably at high noon. Courage, judgment— Why should you shuppose you could defeat me?"

"Try anything," said Grim.

He nodded.

"I alsho. I will try you. You are coming with me. Bright young—what is your name? Jinkrin—Jimkrin? Never mind it, I will give you a good name. You shall be my—"

Baltis and Vasantasena, almost with the same voice, interrupted.

"Dorje! Dorje!"

He snapped his fingers. It was like a whip crack. Both doors opened. In came three men through either door, all hooded; and as Jeff and I sprang to our feet they turned long tubes toward us.

"Keep still, you fellows. No use courting certain death," said Grim.

Chullunder Ghose began to test the iron shutters. Baltis walked forward to face Dorje.

"Very well," she said, "kill me!"

Dorje made a gesture with his finger and the tubemen held their weapons up. She approached Dorje. He turned and struck her—one blow that sent her reeling backward. She fell, writhing. I picked her up; she was winded.

"Nothing doing, you fellows," said Grim. "No sense in bucking the impossible."

Vasantasena began to suspect there was something wrong with her arrangements. She shook her waiting woman, whispered, shoved her, and the woman went running toward the right hand door. One of the tube men turned his weapon on her. I suppose it went off, but there was neither sight or sound; the woman merely fell dead, and Dorje took no notice. I could smell no gas. Vasantasena screamed and Jeff swore savagely between his teeth.

"Come!" said Dorje, pointing to the door.

Grim glanced at us and, with magnificent calm, said—

"So long, you fellows."

DORJE snapped his fingers. The door opened. Dorje gestured with his head. Grim walked out. Dorje followed. The six tubemen stood and faced us with their backs toward the open door until some one outside whistled. Then they backed out one by one, the last man closing the door after him. We heard the heavy bolts click.

I went in a hurry for the other door, but that was locked, too, on the outside. I examined Vasantasena's waiting woman. She seemed lifeless, but I laid her on the lounge beside the window. Jeff was wrenching at the shutters.

"Get me a tool, a weapon—anything!" he grumbled. "Damn it, let's get out of here!"

Chullunder Ghose went looking for a tool. He overturned the dais—found a two-foot bronze image underneath it, almost solid.

"Anybody else smell fire?" I asked.

"Smell it?" said Jeff. "Can't you hear it?"

He took the bronze god from the *babu* and began to rain blows on the iron shutter, making enough din to awaken Delhi, while Vasantasena beat her breasts and rushed here and there, trying the doors, screaming, beating on the panels with her fists—then running back to scream in Jeff's ear, until I dragged her away.

I could hear dim, distant screams now and the crackle of flames. There was a hot stench. Smoke began to creep along the floor cracks, and there was more of it, up where wall met ceiling. There was nothing to do but watch Jeff work. I saw flame lick under the door before he broke the shutter down at last with a crash of window glass, and found another outside shutter of thick teak. He could not smash that, but the bolt broke.

"Out with the women!"

I had the curtains ready. Four of them tied end to end were long enough. The floor was well alight now and the heat was terrific, but I almost had to throw Vasantasena through the window. I believe she wanted to commit *suttee*. However, she went down hand over hand fast enough when she found there was nothing else for it. I took Baltis then and held her while I slid to the ground. The *babu* followed me. Then Jeff, with his coat on fire; and before he reached the ground the flames had eaten through the rope, so that he fell at my feet and I smothered the burning coat with garden dirt.

"Now, where's Grim?"

We had to run for it to escape the crashing timbers and the clouds of hot smoke bursting between cracking walls. The entire house was already done for—tinder, generations old and drier than matchwood. As I looked back the roof collapsed amid a roaring holocaust of sparks and flame. It was by the light of that that we saw where Grim had gone.

The thing—it resembled nothing we had ever seen—arose, not more than fifty yards away from us, from beyond a clump of ornamental trees that shaded a fountain in Vasantasena's garden. It reflected the flames. It was long, cylindrical, had no propeller, no wings. It arose quite leisurely. It appeared to be made of metal and had fluted sides, like corrugated iron. I guessed its length at fifty feet, its girth at fifteen. It shone like silver, blood-red where its corrugations caught the firelight. It went straight up until it was almost lost to sight, then shot away toward the northeast, as fast as sometimes the moon appears to move between the rifts of storm blown clouds.

"Is that the end?" asked Baltis. "What now?"

"The beginning!" said the *babu*.

Jeff laughed.

"We will talk about the end at Chaksam on the Tsang-po River!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

"Here is darkness. Curse me, sahib!"

NO ONE—at least no one to whose credence any one attached the least importance—believed one word of our account of the astonishing machine in which Dorje had escaped from

Delhi; least of all the general, to whose house we hurried as soon as the fire brigade and the police would let us. He received us in pajamas. He was a very efficient general; he had already received three accounts of the burning of Vasantasena's house. He was inclined to believe a spy's report that it was we who set fire to the place.

His doubt of us was irritated by the fact that we had lost sight of Baltis and Vasantasena, whose present whereabouts we no more knew than we did Grim's. He was more than half inclined to place us under arrest, and it was as plain as the nose on his face that from now on the official attitude of the authorities, and particularly of the secret service, might be polite toward us on the surface, but it would be obstructive, suspicious and silently malevolent behind our backs.

"I will send my car for you to your hotel after breakfast," he remarked.

"Checkmate!" said I, as we returned to our taxi. It was then three in the morning.

"He is," Jeff answered. "Generals lose wars by plugging all the gaps through which they might attack the enemy, and forgetting the one through which the enemy escapes. He'll send for us at about nine-thirty. We have six hours and twenty minutes."

"In which to do what?" I demanded.

"In which to thank God," said Jeff, "that we're warned not to sprawl in the government net. Get out of this, Chullunder Ghose. Tell Benjamin we're coming by the back door."

But the *babu* had a notion of his own—a better one.

"Rammy sahib, Benjamin expects us. That Jew hears everything. He will have heard already that Vasantasena's house is burnt. He will suspect us. Therefore he will suspect the authorities of suspecting us. Therefore he will deduce we are in difficulties. To whom else should we go but to him? So he will keep the back door open, and he will stage a camouflage. And he will not suspect us of being such innocents as to arrive in the same taxi that has waited for us where a general's myrmidons could myrmidate driver of same.

"Let us emerge discreetly, you first. Thusly: At first dark corner you vociferously say, in driver's hearing, I am stink in nostrils of obscenity, or some such platitude familiar to him, in order that his penny wise profundity may leap to circumstantial conclusion. Get me? Visibly exasperated by your honor's criticism, I stop cab and get into seat beside driver, for obvious purpose of borrowing from distance the enchantment it is said to lend to disenchanted and humiliated objurgatee.

"I preoccupy attention of said driver while your honors get the hell from here into the shadows, if I may be excused for quoting poetry of U. S. A. United States. Thus we drive on, leaving you to find your way to Benjamin's on foot, or even in another cab, as case may be."

"All right. But how will you get out of it?"

"Through needle's eye of opportunity! Might even drive to hotel for the sake of mystifying Jehu. Much more likely, will embarrass said informer by seizing wheel of chariot and causing a collision with wheel of passing cart. During altercation which inevitably follows while constable writes down names and numbers, this *babu* absents himself; and taxi driver is so busy inventing accusations against driver of cart, who retorts with luridly uncensored details of the history of taxi driver's mother, that constable arrests them both.

"And it will be long after nine-thirty before they are hailed before a magistrate and sentenced to a day or two in jail in lieu of fine which neither will consent to pay. See—here is darkness. Curse me, sahib!"

Jeff did a perfect performance. He even scandalized the driver, and an Indian cabman is no chaste stickler for polite speech. The *babu* went into a paroxysm of indignant righteousness, stopped the taxi, clambered out, and held the driver's close attention while we slipped out through the far door. As we vanished

down a side street in almost Cimmerian darkness I could hear the *babu's* voice, disconsolate, in Hindustanee:

"Drive on! Drive on! It is bad enough to have one's ears burned. Look not backward lest you lose your eyesight! Drive on! Let us swiftly be rid of such blasphemous drunkards!"

Jeff's Kashgar costume blended him into the Delhi darkness, and his intimate familiarity with Delhi slums and byways made it a simple matter to find our way to Benjamin's. But my European clothes were more conspicuous and it seemed likely that one of the ubiquitous government spies would turn in a report before morning of my having been seen wandering the streets—a white man walking with an Asiatic. It would be simple to follow us to our destination. I suggested to Jeff that it might be wiser for me to walk alone to the hotel.

"Trust Benjamin," he answered, but I did not. I was in a mood to trust no one and nothing.

However, Jeff's confidence was not misplaced. Systems of spies in contact with a centralized bureaucracy and backed by armed force, automatically foster similar resources in the governed. Short of extermination, never in the whole world's history has any government succeeded in suppressing a nation's freedom of communication or destroying its ability to conspire and contrive expedients.

THERE was a man near Benjamin's back door who saw us coming while he held the attention of two constables by telling them a long, unlikely tale about conspiracy to loot the store and carry off the daughter of a near-by silversmith. He threw his arms up in apparent despair at their incredulity. But that was a signal.

Instantly, from nowhere, there exploded one of those sudden riots that sweep like a flurry of wind down-street and carry all before them until they cease in an equally sudden calm and no man knows what caused it or why nobody was hurt. Both constables were swept around a corner, blowing whistles and trying to use their truncheons on the heads of men who merely pushed them down an alleyway and vanished, while we entered unobserved through Benjamin's back door.

"*Tschuh-tschuh!* You have been a long time on the way!" said Benjamin. "I expected you sooner."

Others also expected us. Benjamin led to a cellar of whose existence even Jeff was ignorant—and Jeff once lay hidden in Benjamin's place for days on end, when secret agents of the since exterminated Nine Unknown were after him. There was a trapdoor that swung on a pivot hidden beneath blankets on a false floor. A stairway led between stone walls into a place resembling one of those chambers in the Roman catacombs where fugitives from authority survived in spite of ancient Rome's intelligence department. It was lighted by imported American candles stuck into ancient brass vases, and furnished with comparatively modern cots and camp chairs bought by Benjamin from some expensively equipped explorer.

Forth from an inner chamber stepped Vasantasena, looking like an actress of classic tragedy. She had beaten her breasts. She was demanding deeper misery than any one had ever felt. Her eyes burned like those of a parched and hungry tigress.

"She mourns her women," remarked Benjamin. "They—and her faith in Dorje, and in all her false gods—all were burned. There is only hate left."

Vasantasena did not speak, but I thought she did not hate Benjamin, although she might have said she did, if she were asked. Behind her, Baltis stared out of the inner gloom and seemed the more dynamic of the two—less desperate. Vasantasena seemed to have no hope except in deeper misery that might relieve tortured pride; but Baltis, it appeared to me, had humor left, ironical perhaps, but real. Humor is a sign of faith in something other than the vanity which humor mocks. Her words confirmed it.

"*Mon dieu!* You think, you two, that destiny awaits your leisure? Jeemgreem is over the roof of the world and face to face with Dorje! He fights his duel! Meanwhile, you go, I suppose, to ask the military to believe in an engineless airplane—or perhaps to ask for permits to go to Chak-sam!"

"Can you suggest anything?" Jeff asked her.

"*Enfin.* You turn to me? At last, eh? It is I who shall suggest?"

"Suggest why we should trust you," Jeff retorted.

"Imbecile! If you and Jeemgreem and the rest of you had tr-r-rusted me— But how could I expect it? It is my *karma.* Even Dorje did not trust me! He believes he burned me, along with Vasantasena, whom he mistrusts also. Always one last straw makes insolence intolerable. Life after life I have had to teach that dog that he will always fail unless he tr-r-usts me. And so now in the end, because so many times he has mistr-r-usted me, and r-ruined me, I am obliged to r-ruin him! You look to me? You do well. You can do nothing without me!"

"That is true," said Benjamin.

"It is indeed true!" She pushed past Vasantasena, who, in spite of her trade and her tragedy, preserved the Oriental woman's nervousness in presence of alien men. "Can you persuade Vasantasena to obey you? But I tell you that without her help you will never again see Jeemgreem!"

"That is true," repeated Benjamin.

"Did I say that I love Jeemgreem? Bah! He is not lovable. He is a man of ice that no warmth melts! But Dorje is hateable! And I hate! Dorje needs Jeemgreem to be his lieutenant. He will not kill him before he has exhausted every temptation, and every threat, and perhaps even every torture to persuade Jeemgreem to yield and obey. He will show Jeemgreem buried cities and all the marvels that were in the world when the world was Atlantis and the deluge had not yet made men savages."

"He can do it," said Benjamin.

"But in the end he will have to kill Jeemgreem, because Jeemgreem is the sort that never yields to *force majeure,* although he sometimes seems to yield, but that is strategy. So you men shall obey me."

"Go to hell," Jeff answered.

"Unless you obey me, you shall never rescue Jeemgreem!"

"Better make peace with her," Benjamin whispered. "*Tschah-yeh!* Women without children, what are they? Devils! Devils!"

BENJAMIN'S spectacled bookkeeper opened the trap door, peered at us and spoke with a squeak that resembled the plaint of the door hinges. Down the steps came Chullunder Ghose, and one could guess by the subdued triumph of his stride that he had either good news or a more than usually fantastic scheme in his head.

"*Salaam!*" he remarked with an air of patronising impudence. "If I were uncivilized enough to wear a hat, I would remove it to you! You are damn bad, devilish enterprising woman! Sahibs—we win!"

"Do not trust him. That one is a bad one," murmured Benjamin. He had never forgiven, and never would forgive Chullunder Ghose for some trick played on him in days gone by.

"You? What have you done?" demanded Baltis.

Her eyes narrowed almost into slits. She glanced at Vasantasena; for an agonied second she believed the *babu* and Vasantasena had a secret understanding. But Vasantasena's dully disillusioned, tragic face killed that suspicion.

"Done much!" said the *babu.* "Done it muchly, also! An obese with muchness. Much news. I learned that they ascribe the burning of Vasantasena's house to the entertainment of an alien by Vasantasena who thus brought discredit upon an ancient profession; and your honors are accordingly to be deported before further complications can ensue."

Vasantasena, looking like death, with irregular seams and splotches where the tears had washed cosmetic from her face, turned on her heel with an exclamation of disgust and disappeared into the inner room, her right hand feeling for support against the masonry, her left hand beating the air so that her bracelets clashed a dirge of melancholy. I heard a cot creak as she threw herself against it on her knees.

"Listen to me first," Benjamin suggested. But the *babu* was in haste, although he pretended he was not. He was as pleased to sneer at Benjamin as Benjamin at him.

"You may tell them afterwards," he said, "that once I tricked you out of rupees sixteen hundred. At the moment I am speaking of important matters."

"Step on it!" said Jeff. "How do we overtake Grim?"

CHAPTER XXXIV

"Will show you what Oriental mayhem means; will cut your nose off."

"DORJE," remarked Benjamin, "will go by way of Chak-sam, because there he has a relay post. But his goal is beyond the Kwen-lun Mountains, to the north and west of Koko-nor. And he will not travel by day, for fear of being seen; so he will come to earth at a place this side of Katmandu, which has no name and is not on any map. It is in a valley amid mountains. It is reputed sacred. Even the people of Nepal avoid it. He will stay there all day, until after dark. But how shall you find the place? How get there? Ten days—or it might be eight, or even seven; I have one who could guide you, and the Middle Way is open, unknown even to the secret service. But in seven, eight, ten days, where is Dorje? Gone—and Jimgrim with him! And the Roof of the World to be crossed! And then the Kwen-lun Ranges! *Hey-yeh!* It is the end of Jimgrim!"

"If it is the end of your croaking, then this *babu* may perhaps sing!" said Chullunder Ghose. "Tell me, would you offer rupees sixteen hundred for the means of reaching Jimgrim?"

"More than that," Benjamin answered.

"You may charge off the extra for interest. I no longer owe you rupees sixteen hundred! Do you wish to come with us and see Jimgrim before noon? No? Then you must take my word for it. But we shall jolly well need breakfast before daybreak, so you had better tell your fat daughter to cook it. Rammy sahib likes three cups of coffee, if the cups are big ones; otherwise, five. Five of us—say twenty cups of coffee and enough eggs for a regiment, with fruit, bread, butter and whatever else you have!"

"It shall be done," said Benjamin. "But, dog of a *babu*, if you play a trick on us—"

"Trick? Me? Am simple person," said the *babu*. "But let us sit."

We squatted on an Afghan blanket, all except Baltis, who stood with her back to the wall, her arms folded, watching us as if she knew we meant to leave her there and follow Grim without her aid.

"Pursuing purpose of deceiving taxi driver, this *babu* as per prearranged plan took hold of wheel and brought about collision with a bullock cart, whose driver turned out to be person of malevolence. In cut-off-nose-to-spite-his-face-ishness he swung his bullocks so that taxi driver could by no means make a lightsome getaway, not knowing that a wheel of taxicab was broken but intent on breaking taxi driver's head with butt of cudgel. God is very good to this *babu*. In course of altercation, during which a constable admonished both of them with his truncheon and whistled for help, there came unstipulated godsend in the form of five passenger, high speed, ram-you-damn-you, nickelplated French motor car, driven with exhaust wide open by a drunken citizen of France, who put on brakes in nick of time to let this *babu* give good imitation of casualty with at least two broken legs.

"Same had sobering effect. Neverthe-

less, sobriety not yet adequate to cause suspicion when this casualty climbed in without assistance, sighing, 'Take me to the hospital—be swift—will show way—straight ahead!'

"Then I commended all those men to God, who doubtless loves them, and directed my attention to the officer at wheel of this amazing vehicle that passionately scorched through streets in search of hospital that fortunately lies in opposite direction.

"Self, am lightning calculator. Frenchmen are the only ones who drive through streets at that speed. How many Frenchmen in Delhi? Ten? Not probably. Of those, how many drive a car like lunatics possessed of sixteen extra senses and a drunkard's luck? How many Frenchmen get drunk? Very few, unless the English entertain them. Q.E.D. that this one has been entertained. Why? Aviator? Why not? May he not be that one who has piloted the plane that brought our beautiful princess from Cairo? Bold guess, but am seldom timid unless threatened with knives or by emancipated wife of bosom.

"Self, am also super P. F. D., which means am perfectly familiar with damsels, due to wife of bosom, to say nothing of three daughters who are married and have husbands who dislike work as *infra dignitatem. Verb sap,* very.

"Not improbably, this aviator has been dated up and now is looking for his Cinderella, who has very likely given an indefinite address. I take a chance, about as long as if I bet you that the sun gets up next Tuesday morning. I lean over back of front seat and say 'Baltis!' in gentleman's ear.

"BRAKES, four, functioning as when irresistible force meets immovable obstacle. Invitation to climb into front seat. Why am I? Who am I? Decided I am messenger from Princess Baltis, sent in search of Prince Charming, burdened with her confidences. Am political extremist, very. Said so, in so many words, each suitably selected for its vagueness and inspirational suggestiveness. Suggested also that we might do well to drive on, to avoid the impudence of curious policemen. So we began to circumscribe a square mile, like a puppy pursuing its tail; and we went so fast that I swear I could see the tail light just in front of us.

"Speed, I find, exhilarates the brain. Thought drunkenly. Threw logic and all laws of probability to hell. It is obviously not in the least probable that the French secret service will neglect its godsent opportunities. *Ergo,* this aviator is the sort of gentlemanly patriot who does the fancy spying for his government. Why not? If he is any good, he may be even now establishing an unsuspicious character of drunken irresponsibility in order to conceal a deadly purpose.

"Do the French not wish to know any number of things about the British dispositions and preparedness in India? Is there anything that the French do not wish to know? They crave omniscience, in order to be better able to make us conscious of their culture.

"Multiplying guesswork by the square root of improbability, and knowing that our adorable princess is an ex-French spy, this *babu* deduces that in order to escape from observation, and in order to save time in reaching Dorje when she shall have learned his whereabouts, she will have dated up this aviator to give her a joyride after reaching India. Perhaps she will have promised, should he set her down at some place indicated by herself, to do a little cultural observation for the French general staff. That is what this *babu* would have done in said *predicamento;* and is she less free with promises than I am? Promises are easier to make than pie crust, and a whole lot easier to break.

"We now descend to facts. I know that our adorable princess has met Vasantasena, in whose now incinerated studio of chastity I simulated drunkenness and learned, from giggling girls, that some one has been sent to tell a Frenchman whither he should come. Obviously, our beloved

princess was the sender of the message—to this aviator. Six plus six are sixty-six. And the rest is easy.

"I discover his name, by saying I must not pour confidences into incorrectly labeled ears. His name is Henri de la Fontaine Coq. I peer into his mental processes by saying there is nothing to be done unless he can begin at daybreak. He reminds me he has had but one hour's sleep since leaving Bagdad. I remind him that sleep is the curse of opportunists. He assures me in four dimensional English mixed with aviation French that opportunity is a pretty *oiseau* which invariably comes into the cage that he has artfully prepared.

"So I demand particulars, assuring him that there are other plans in competition with his own. He proves to me he is a person of some merit. He has been forehanded. In anticipation of emergency, he has pretended that the plane in which he made his record breaking journey is in need of readjustment. Men are working on it at this minute. He is to make a test at daybreak, to discover whether, with a full tank, he can now ascend to I forget what altitude. And to convince the British Air Force and the authorities that he only intends to fly a little distance, he has arranged to leave his flight companion on the ground. Thus, should he receive a message from our puritanical princess, he can ascend for purpose of test, gyrate for purpose of jolly well making the Air Force believe he is up to no mischief at all, fly a few miles, and descend for purpose of picking up her and whoever is with her, though he does not yet believe that she will have companions. He will be disappointed when he sees us. I am sympathetic *babu*."

"Very good," said Jeff, "but what if he refuses to take extra passengers?"

"International scandal instantly. Eminent French aviator ordered to the ground and sent home for conspiring with unsavory *babu* to smuggle undesirables to Katmandu, which is forbidden territory. Nay, nay! Having started, he must continue. After reaching neighborhood of Katmandu, he makes forced landing. We vanish. He invents prevarication about throttle having jammed wide open, or some other mechanical alibi that authorities can pretend to believe for the sake of saving face, each knowing that the other spies on each and neither of them actually looking for a scandal. Point is, that he had not yet received a message from our princess. I delivered it."

Baltis snorted but said nothing at the moment. It was Jeff who spoke next.

"All right, let's say you bluff him into taking us. Will the plane hold us all?"

"Like can with one sardine too many. Chummy—no room to be distant to each other."

"How about the weight?"

"Spill gasoline from reserve tank. Eight pounds to the gallon, spill a hundred pounds; plenty left to take us all the way to Katmandu."

"He will be watched," said Jeff. "The moment he heads away he will be followed."

"They will have to summon aviators, warm up engines, telephone to God-knows-who, for God-knows-what instructions signed in triplicate on blue-form-B. He will have a long start, sahib."

"But suppose they overtake us?"

"What with? He has just broken all world's distance records. Barring a few pursuit planes, all of which are guarding northwest frontier from raids by Pathan and Afridi Hillmen, his is much the fastest plane in India—perhaps in all the world. Catch as catch can, I wish them luck. But I bet you pounds Egyptian fifty."

"All right," said Jeff, "we'll try it anyhow. But how are we to find the place where Dorje landed?"

"We will take Vasantasena. I believe she knows it."

"She does," said Benjamin.

Chullunder Ghose grinned. I think he knew exactly what would happen next.

"Then all we have to do," he added, "is to eat breakfast, borrow rugs and

overcoats, and take our princess and the other lady to the place at which I made our assignation. It is—"

"I will not go!" Baltis interrupted. "Henri de la Fontaine Coq will certainly not take you unless I go also."

SHE WAS a bargainer in instinct; but I think her main motive was exasperation that Chullunder Ghose had discovered her plan, stolen it and made it practical.

"You will not stay here," said Benjamin. "I will turn you out into the street."

"Where you will be arrested and sent back to France," I suggested.

"Do they send women like you to Devil's Island?" Jeff wondered.

Chullunder Ghose stood up and faced her, arms akimbo.

"Sweet sahiba, this *babu* speaks reverently, always being worshipful of ingenuity and disrespect for traditional rules of conduct. Self am pre-Falstaffian anti-delusionist, to whom all human honor rooted in a mess of profiteering stands. Inhuman, spiritual honor is an unknown quantity, but dimly guessed at by those who have friends in tight places. Jimmy Jimgrim, to my face, has called me very often names that I would not repeat in presence of such beauty and integrity as yours. But, behind my back, he has described me as his friend and always trusted me. It seems he thinks that you are necessary to his designs on Dorje. Consequently, if this *babu* lives, you will accompany us, if necessary in a sack, until our Jimmy Jimgrim sends you to the devil."

Jeff glanced at Benjamin.

"Have you a sack that's big enough?"

But Baltis sneered.

"Could I persuade an aviator from the inside of a sack?"

"Not likely," said the *babu*, "but I think I could persuade him easily enough. Am man of eloquent resources. First I will persuade you. Because Jimmy Jimgrim needs us, you will use your full charm on that aviator. Otherwise, I will make you a living illustration of what Oriental mayhem means. Will cut your nose off."

She glanced at Jeff, then me.

"They would never let you attempt it."

"I would hold you while he did it," I retorted.

"I have stuff that makes a wound burn like eternal fire," said Benjamin.

Chullunder Ghose continued.

"But I offer you this promise. Am professional liar, an immoralist, a person of no reputation and even less desire for one. Nevertheless I keep all promises. If you will play your part and use your charms on Captain Henri de la Fontaine Coq, until we reach Nepal; and if you try to play no tricks on us, I promise you my friendship. It is my unfortunate habit to treat friendship as the only comprehensible religion."

"That is different," she answered. "I accept that. You will support me before Jeemgreem? I need Jeemgreen's help if I shall outwit Dorje."

"I will say you are a good girl. He will not believe it, but he will condone my indiscretion," said the *babu*.

Baltis nodded, turned and went into the inner room, presumably to tell Vasantasena. Benjamin, leading the way, invited us to breakfast in an upper room. Chullunder Ghose took Jeff's arm.

"Rammy sahib, crown me! Mayhem! Me, who can not see a tooth pulled and not shudder! And, oh, what have I promised? Friendship to a woman, to whom friendship is a bargain on a scratch me basis, and I scratch you! She will scratch my eyes out.

"I will bet you pounds Egyptian fifty that the Jewess overboils the eggs."

CHAPTER XXXV

"She is sure she will slay Dorje."

CAPTAIN Henri de la Fontaine Coq was of the type that impudently upsets calculations, having genius for seeing flaws in rules and taking prompt advantage of them, but

that normally omits to profit except in excitement, which is some men's standard of value. And as alcohol makes some men brazenly indifferent to consequences, so excitement made him icily remote from prudence. He had calm eyes that observed everything, feared nothing except boredom, and appeared to be quietly laughing at the absurdity of caring two sous whether the sun should rise or not tomorrow morning.

We amused him. Baltis amused him immensely. The thought that no one had remembered to stipulate what his movements should be while in India, and that, although Nepal is closed territory into which no alien may enter, there was actually no order in council or any other published rule (since nobody had thought of it) forbidding foreign planes to fly into Nepal, intrigued him beyond laughter.

The appointed rendezvous was to the north of Delhi, on a *maidan* where the jungle, that has overgrown the ancient city, lies hedged around with ruins. It was a landing place that called for iron nerve, because of broken masonry that had been piled in heaps as part of an abandoned scheme for clearing the whole area; but it was easy to see from the air and had the additional advantage that there were no dwellings near it except those of criminals who make their hives among the ruins.

We went to the place in a closed car, not unlike a delivery van or a police patrol wagon; there were small gratings instead of windows; it was the sort of thing in which women are transported from one harem to another. And the driver was a taciturn Moslem who nodded when Benjamin spoke to him, made no remarks, and favored us with no more recognition than if we had been sacks of merchandise, although he seemed to fear Vasantasena.

He drove at a moderate speed, negotiated carefully the rough track leading through the jungle to the cleared *maidan*, waited just exactly long enough for all of us to get out, glanced to make sure we had done so, and then drove away again, ignoring Jeff's impulsive offer of money.

Wrapped like mummies in the clothing Benjamin had provided, and a bit uncomfortable, because Vasantasena had brought tragedy as well as convention along with her, we sat on broken masonry and waited until daylight. Twenty minutes followed, each of them as irritating as the other, and all of us nervous from lack of sleep as well as from wondering whether Henri de la Fontaine Coq would come.

It was Chullunder Ghose who seduced from Vasantasena the one short speech she did make. In the courtly Persian that such women, in common with poets and elegant social swells, consider is the only language fit to speak, he shot one question at her.

"Dorje will reimburse you for the burning of your house?"

"And my women!" she retorted. "Dorje is a devil who has stabbed his servant."

He translated for my benefit, then added comment:

"And the strange thing, sahibs, is that she regards us and an airplane simply as the instruments provided for her by the moralistic god she worships. She—she alone has importance—she and her *dharma*. It is not revenge she seeks, nor will she do an act of justice. There is a sort of absoluteness. Dorje has done that to her which sets up consequences; she gives birth to consequence; it is a sort of sacred frenzy such as actuated all those widows who committed *suttee* in the days gone by. She intends to slay Dorje, but not to survive him. And she is absolutely sure that she will slay him."

"What do you know about women?" Baltis asked him.

"Nothing, most inscrutable sahiba. That is why I ignorantly dared to offer you my friendship—such as it is . . . I am enigma to myself, so how shall I know anything of women?"

I believe he was the only one of us, including Grim, who came within light-year measurement of understanding Baltis. Grim understood her as hunters do the animals they capture and employ.

Chullunder Ghose, along some occult line of sympathy, could see behind the mask of her contempt for loyalty and virtue. I think he understood it was a mask. But I don't believe Grim understood it. Jeff and I certainly did not.

DAWN broke brazen yellow and three jackals, jabbering obscenely, fled as if they thought the great descending plane was something prehistoric, lurking in the tombs of memory—some monstrous bird of prey, perhaps a pterodactyl. Henri de la Fontaine Coq made one of those landings that destroy an onlooker's belief in prudence and the laws of gravity and common sense. It was a superbly perfect landing, too good to be anything but accident or almost superhuman skill. He taxied to a standstill within twenty feet of us and calmly signed to us to turn the plane around, so that he might take off unobstructed. There was no wind; his only problem was the piles of débris.

He smiled with the curious air of one who regards a biped as an anachronism—estimated, I suppose, our aggregate poundage, got out, spilled a quantity of gasoline which he remarked, in French to Baltis, might help to explain his movements to the Royal Air Force, should they turn inquisitive; helped Baltis into the front seat and climbed in after her. Jeff and I had to restart the engine and that, even with Jeff's weight and strength, took several minutes. Then the rest of us scrambled into the rear cockpit, wedged like herrings in a barrel. Chullunder Ghose and Vasantasena were both airsick soon after we started.

We escaped the Royal Air Force by about five minutes, perhaps less. Our aviator had been watched and was seen to descend. Supposing him in difficulties, five planes took the air to fly to his assistance, rising almost at the same moment as ourselves. Coq calmly turned toward them. Seeing him apparently returning without trouble, they went to ground again. Coq at once began circling for altitude, and it was not until he was several thousand feet above the Air Force hangar that he took a bee-line toward the northeast. Then, barring accident, we were beyond pursuit.

Baltis was in her element. Several times she turned to look at us, enjoying our discomfort and the thought that she was actually now in charge of operations. Coq would go wherever she directed. Her triumphant smile suggested the intention to make us pay at compound interest for each humiliation she had suffered at our hands. I wrote on a scrap of paper, "Can he find Katmandu?" and passed it to her. She nodded—showed a map that Coq had brought with him. It became evident that on her way from Cairo she had fully informed the Frenchman as to what might be expected of him. She had possibly even told him about Dorje, and undoubtedly she had coaxed from Vasantasena all the information that she needed about landmarks.

I scribbled on another sheet of paper, "It is not Katmandu, but a valley perhaps fifty miles from there. Can you find it?"

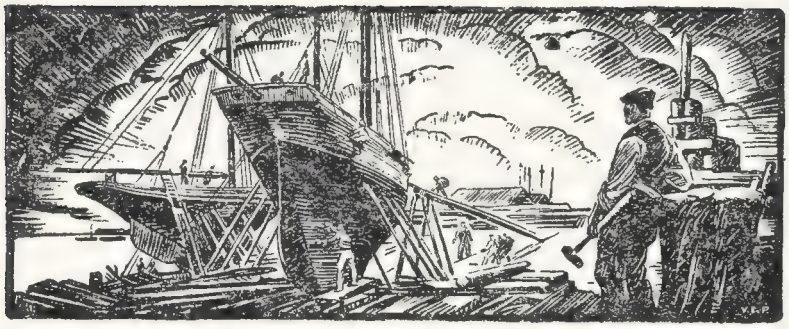
She borrowed my pencil and was a long time writing her reply, which was only two words jerkily scrawled. I have kept them, pasted in a notebook, as the only souvenir of her that I have excepting a scar that is as indelible as memory itself.

Vous m'embêtez.

I showed it to Jeff. He produced an unregistered Colt automatic that Benjamin had supplied from some unlawful arsenal; Benjamin had armed me, too, and even forced a pistol on Chullunder Ghose. Jeff wrote on a page of his own memorandum book, tore it out and passed it to me to hand to her. When she turned to receive it he showed her the pistol. His note read:

One trick, even one mistake, and I will shoot you. This is a promise.

TO BE CONCLUDED



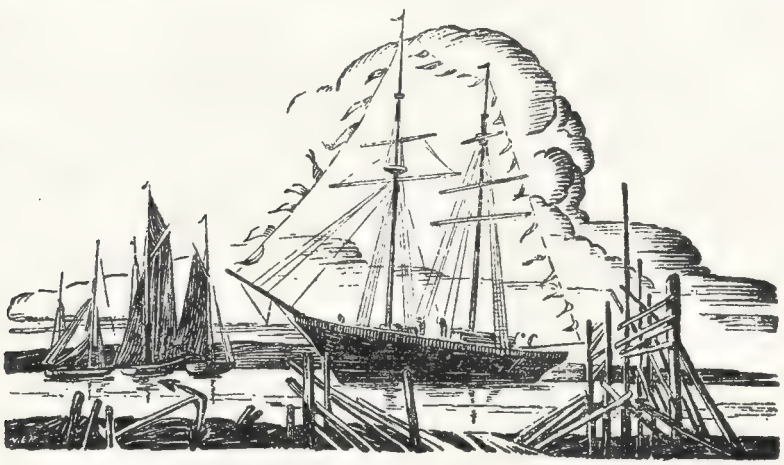
A SONG FOR SHIPBUILDERS

By HARRY KEMP

I celebrate the building of the ship
More than her crowded launching, flags a-whip.
Though certainly there is no other thing
Quite like this, but the roar round a new king—
Where waves walk foaming up and rush
back streaming
Along a sentient thing of noblest fettle;
With far, reverberant echoes, whistles screaming,
And cheering folk to watch her ride and settle.

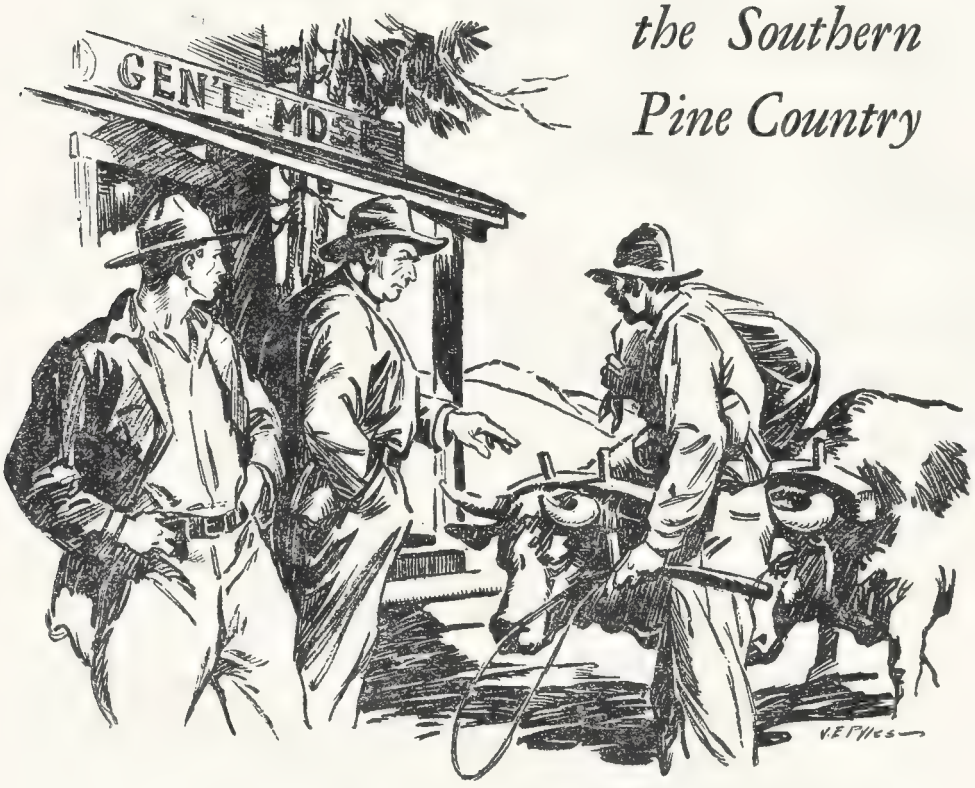
I sing the slow achievement of the ship,
And not the shouting and the celebration
Poets have rhymed, of every time and nation.
I sing the delicate plumbline dropping sheer,
The bolts that take their firm, allotted grip,
The bent, leviathan ribs, the fashioned gear

That wed, close-woven, till she's full created.
Before her launching comes, by multitudes fêted,
And she is sent down fuming ways, to be
The mistress of the cloud, and wind, and sea—
Before she knows the launched, increasing motion
That gives her to the unceasing, green, vast ocean;
Before she's ready for the Five Seas' going,
Wherever the nervous compass points her way,
Where, lightning edged, the bent, black palm leans, blowing,
Or where white icebergs daunt the North's dark day—
Long back of her must live the imagination,
The blueprints' capture of the dream's creation;
And, after that, must thrive the hard, skilled trouble,
The annealing fires, the cauldroned pitch a-bubble;
Years back of these, the patience of invention,
The balanced figures' finest calculation,
And all the heartbreaks that forecast Prevailing,
(Aye, and all craft that ever have gone sailing!)
Before the ship looms fit for God's intention!



VALUE RECEIVED

A Story of the Southern Pine Country



By HOWARD ELLIS DAVIS

THE DESKS and chairs of the sawmill office were worn smooth by long usage, but the big room had an empty look. The long, tall desk against the wall, raised a few inches above the floor, before which for so many years the bookkeeper had walked his plank, was no longer cluttered with ledgers and great shipping books and tally sheets and sheets of log scales. On the walls no longer hung many clip files holding cutting orders, shipping instructions and the innumerable other memoranda pertaining to the operation of a large sawmill in the long leaf pine region of Alabama.

In the middle of the room three men sat with their chairs drawn into a circle, talking earnestly together. Sewell Slade, young, boyish, rather slightly built, sat slouched in his chair, one leg hooked over the arm. The foot suspended there was neatly shod, but his ankle was bare, and below the baggy trousers leg was displayed several inches of bare shank. His

clothing was immaculate. His thick, dark hair was brushed straight back on his head. He had the appearance of a college boy. In fact, that is what he was—or recently had been. To use his own expression, he was so recently out of school that the ink on his diploma was scarcely dry.

His brother Scott, a man of nearly forty, was tall, broad, muscular. The set of his jaw and the expression of his keen brown eyes somehow proclaimed the fact that he had had to fight his way through life and that although his victories so far were perhaps not phenomenal he was yet undefeated.

The third member of the conference, Dod Pearson, a countryman from up the river, was thick bodied, placid of countenance, and he spoke with the slow, easy drawl of the backwoods. From beneath the brim of his wide black hat he kept glancing at Sewell. His eyes expressed skepticism, doubt. He seemed to regard the college boy very much as the master of a pack of hounds looks on one of those high bred little dogs of another breed; it might be as valuable as its pedigree and the price paid for it would indicate, but he would have to be shown.

"The proposition is this," Scott said. "I have run this mill here in Mobile for Mr. Bondell for ten years, and now that he has retired I have leased it from him. She's a reliable old sister and, lying on the river this way, she's convenient both for rafts bought on the market, and for what timber we might pick up and log to the river and float down. She needs a thorough overhauling, and that I'm going to give her.

"Mr. Bondell has nearly three million feet of timber up on Hal's Creek, that becomes Roache Bayou as it gets nearer the river. He's going to let us have that timber and pay for it as we cut it. You're going up there and log that timber, Sewell. Part of it can be put in the bayou, but most of it will have to be put in the creek and run down. All of the rafts will have to be made up in the bayou. It's up in the Cajun country, and they will do your log hauling for you. You will hire your own log cutters and raftsmen. It's not necessary to tell you that we'll be operating on a shoestring. The log haul on that timber positively must not cost over five dollars a thousand feet, log scale.

"Dod, here, runs a stave business on the river, and a store. He's going to finance our logging operations. That is, he will run the Cajuns in his store and as you get each raft to me and I cut it into lumber and turn the lumber into money we will pay him and pay for the stumpage. I've made a trade with Jemison, Meade and Company of Mobile to take our stuff and pay cash on delivery. They have given me some pretty good schedules—square timbers, prime, Genoa prime, and some boards and deals for shipment to South America. If we watch our step, we ought to make a profit of not less than two dollars a thousand feet, maybe more; and this old sister will turn out fifty thousand feet a day, right along. But if we're not careful and don't watch all the loose ends pretty close we'll be swamped on the first go round."

"Did I understand you to say that he's to 'tend to the loggin'?" Dod asked, jerking his thumb in the direction of Sewell in a manner that made the boy flush.

"Yes."

"Better keep him here in the office."

"Why?"

"You say he's spent fo' years gittin' a college edication. He ought to write a pretty good hand."

"Darnedst hen scratching you ever saw. I can hardly read his letters."

"My Gawd! But you better keep him out the woods. Them Cajuns will eat him up like a cat eatin' young mockin' birds."

"He's really more hardboiled than he looks, Dod," Scott said, grinning. "And he knows quite a bit about logging. He tries to give me the credit of sending him to college; but he has worked every summer up in the logging woods, where they were putting the timber to the logging

road which Mr. Bondell ran to the river. And last summer when the superintendent was laid up, he had entire charge for several weeks, and did fine. That's what gave me the idea of our swinging this deal when he got out of school. I've been hoping and planning and living for the time when he and I could go into business together." He dropped an affectionate hand on his younger brother's knee. "And now it looks as if we're going to have our chance, thanks to you and Mr. Bondell.

"But working among those Cajuns is going to be an experience entirely new to you, Sewell," he continued seriously, "and you'll have to watch your step. If you don't, you'll wake up some bright morning to the fact that they own you and everything you had."

"What do you mean—that they'll steal it from me?"

"I don't mean that at all. They'll come right up to your face and ask you for it, and you'll give it to 'em."

"I'm not that big a fool, Scott."

"Can't no mo' help them folks gittin' into you than you kin keep the wind from blowin'," Dod said.

"We ought to know, Dod and I," Scott added, laughing. "The year before I went to work down here at the mill, we had a logging contract up in the Cajun country, and they plum' ate us up. He still lives up there among them."

"Then why fool with them at all?" Sewell asked. "Why not employ a regular logging contractor?"

"The Cajuns can do it so much cheaper. They'll make good money, where a regular contractor with a big equipment would no more than play even, or maybe go broke. The Cajuns are a little race of people all to themselves up there in the pine woods. They are in no way connected with the people from Canada who came down and settled in Louisiana, but are the descendants of the French and Spaniards, who had plantations up on the river when Mobile belonged, in turn, to those two nations. Some of them have French, some of them Spanish names. They intermarried with the Indians. The white people hold themselves aloof from them; they hold themselves aloof from the negroes—although in later years some of them have intermarried with the negroes. The ambition of every Cajun man is to be the owner of an ox team. He begins early, selecting the male calves on the range, breaking them in when they are still young. I have seen a team of yearlings drawing a home made cart. When the team is mature and the Cajun has come into possession of a regular two-wheel logging cart, he is launched upon his career. Few of them ever have more than one team, which he drives himself.

"Dod will handle the Cajuns for you, Sewell. You will leave them entirely to him."

MOST of their timber lay on the north side of Hal's Creek, beginning near the creek and running back for about three miles. It was long, straight bodied, and ran well to heart.

"A lot of high grade stuff in that," Sewell remarked to Dod, as the two walked through it on the day after the boy's arrival in the woods. "Look at the distance up to those first limbs. The heart in the butt cuts ought to run pretty clear."

"Sound, too," Dod remarked. "Notice how few doaty trees we've seen? An' most of it will be floaters, which will make it easy to raft."

"Do you think we can get it hauled for five dollars a thousand?"

"Easy. Them Cajuns will make good money at it. What you've got to watch is to keep 'em on a average haul. Ef you make 'em start on the longest haul, they'll all go broke an' quit; an' ef you let 'em start next to the creek they'll all quit as the haul gits longer, an' it'll break you to have what's left put to the creek. Start 'em 'bout midways, then let 'em work toward the creek for a spell an' away from the creek for a spell. That'll keep 'em averaged up. You kin regulate that

by havin' yo' log cutters saw the logs where you tell 'em."

"Are the Cajuns easy to get along with? Will they do what you tell them?"

"As easy handled as any folks you ever worked with. They takes everything good natured, an' they looks on it as a sort of joke every time you pins down on 'em. Know they're goin' to git ahead of you, anyhow."

"Dod, those logs *must not* cost us over five dollars a thousand feet to haul them to the landings on the creek. And if we know before we start that those people are going to get into us—"

"You'll jest have to leave 'em to me. I'll do the best I kin to hold 'em down."

Where the current of Hal's Creek, merging with the sluggish black waters of Roache Bayou, became imperceptible, the stream widened. And here the rafts were to be made up. A hundred yards from the water's edge Sewell had his little office built; a few hundred yards beyond was Dod's store. Between the office and the store he had, at Dod's suggestion, a large ox lot made by nailing pine poles to trees. For a mile up the creek were the landings where the logs would be gathered before rolling them into the water.

After going carefully over the ground, Sewell put his log sawyers, hired for him by Dod, to work cutting the timber. When he was ready, he told Dod, and Dod gave out word from his store that the job of hauling was open.

That afternoon as he sat in his little office, he heard the *chuck-a-luck* of heavy cart wheels coming down through the woods. Looking out of his window, he saw first the two towering wheels of the cart, following the road through the pines; then, as it came nearer, the eight slowly moving beasts that drew it came into view, their yokes creaking. Beside them walked a lank, swarthy individual with unkempt hair. He wore an old slouch hat, hickory shirt and tightly fitting jeans held up by a single suspender. On his feet were heavy brogan shoes, fastened by a metal clasp. Aslant over his shoulder he carried a long handled ox whip, its lash trailing.

Near the entrance to the lot he stopped his team. From the tongue yoke he unfastened the end of the long cart tongue and eased it to the ground. Then he drove the eight beasts, slow, powerful, sluggishly moving, into the lot and unyoked them, standing the yokes with one end of the bows still attached against the fence. Next he unloaded from the cart four double feed troughs and carried them into the lot. Across the bottom of each feed trough were nailed two narrow pieces of plank four or five feet long. The lower ends of these plank rested on the ground, the upper ends leaned against the fence, so that each trough was neck high to an ox. At each double trough he tied two of the beasts with short pieces of chain. Oxen have to be tied up at feeding time, or the stronger and more vicious will roam about, interfering with the others.

The Cajun did not return to the cart—which was nothing more than a frame, the two great wheels connected by a heavy axle upon which rested a windlass for swinging up the logs, which were carried suspended beneath. He came straight to the office and when Sewell met him at the door, he greeted the boy with a white toothed smile.

"You de boss dis outfit?"

"Yes. I suppose you came to see about the logging."

"Wanta git a little grubstake, boss."

Sewell knew that this meant feed for his team rather than supplies for himself, though he perhaps meant both. And here, right at the beginning, was the characteristic against which Scott had warned him. The Cajun did not find it essential to discuss the price or nature of the haul. He was more concerned with getting into debt to him before he ever struck a lick of work. Starting behind, he would always be slipping deeper into debt.

"I'm not grubstaking anybody," Sewell said shortly.

"Gotta have a little grubstake, boss,"

the man repeated. "Gotta feed my team."

"Then go up to Dod Pearson's store and get it, and pay for it!"

The man looked at him as if not comprehending. Then:

"Ain't got no money, boss. Gotta have a little grubstake."

"Go and see Dod Pearson. He'll trade with you about the logging. But I can tell you right now you won't get any grubstake, or anything else, until you put some logs in."

Smiling amiably, seeming in no way put out by this refusal to credit him, the Cajun went off toward the store. In a short time Sewell was surprised to see him return to the lot with a sack of ox feed on one shoulder and a large bundle carried beneath his other arm. After dividing the contents of the sack equally between the four feed troughs, he took the bundle and set off across the woods for his little cabin home back among the hills; maybe two, maybe three, maybe five miles away.

Before his departure, other teams had begun to arrive. Evidently he passed the word, because each of the drivers, after he had put his oxen in the lot, went directly to the store, to return presently with his sack of feed and bundle.

Sewell closed the office and went up to the store, where he seated himself in one corner on a box. The small place was overrun with Cajuns, who were laughing and joking and seemed in a regular holiday mood. One was back at the meat box, cutting himself a large slab of fat bacon, while another awaited his turn. One was filling a large paper bag from the meal barrel; another had set a thick slice of cheese on the scale and waited for Dod to check it. Another had piled on the counter several tins of nickel sardines. All of them were supplied with tobacco, some with black plugs of chewing tobacco, which they also smoked by cutting into small pieces and stuffing into the bowl of a pipe; others with packages of cheap, shredded pipe tobacco, which they also chewed.

Each gathered his purchases in a pile on the counter, then went back to the feed room, whence he returned, shouldering a sack of feed. The smaller purchases were wrapped up by Dod, who then entered the whole in a battered day book against the man's name as grub and feed.

Some of the Cajuns were tanned like ordinary backwoodsmen. Some had the olive skin of their Latin forebears; in some the negro blood was clearly evident. The black hair and piercing eyes of one or two told of Indian blood coursing in their veins. They all wore old slouch hats or tattered straws, and on their feet were heavy brogan shoes, or dress shoes that were in shreds, showing protruding toes. Some were barefooted. They were soft spoken and mild and ever ready with a laugh or a jest, often at their own expense.

A LARGE old man with stooped shoulders and a mass of untidy white hair falling from beneath his old felt hat stood quietly until the others were served, then he drew Dod off to one side and engaged him in earnest conversation. For ten minutes they argued, Dod protesting, the other pleading, cajoling. Then Dod threw up his hands in an apparently helpless gesture.

"All right, Jo," he said. "I reckin I'll have to let you have part of that; but you can't expect to draw yo' whole durned corntract at the first go round."

The old man smiled and nodded, seeming well pleased, and when he left the store he carried on his shoulder a box which contained not only rations but some drygoods, stockings, and two pairs of women's shoes. He was followed by his three sons, each of whom shouldered a sack of feed.

"Dod," Sewell said when the store was empty, except for the two of them, "I didn't know that you ran accounts with these people."

"Them accounts I've jest opened up is agin the loggin'. When you settles for the loggin', you'll jest pay me."

"But there hasn't been any logging done yet. Suppose some of those fellows never go to work."

"No danger of that. They wouldn't call this even a start in gittin' ahead of the game."

"Do you mean the whole crowd has set out deliberately to beat you?"

"They wouldn't look on it that way. They jest call it good business to take out of a proposition mo' than they put in. I'm a grown man an' supposed to have my eyes open an' know what I'm doin'. It's jest a game of wits—or business—between us. There's nothin' bad about the Cajuns. They're honest, as they sees the light of honesty. You seldom hear of criminal lawlessness amongst them. But gittin' ahead of the game is the chief fun they gits out of workin'."

"They are ahead of you to start on. What are you going to do about that?"

"Jest have to hold 'em down the best I kin," Dod said, rubbing his chin.

"I told that first man he couldn't have a grubstake. But he got in to you, and put the others next. Why couldn't you be firm, like I was?"

"Because there wouldn't a one of 'em have gone to work without a grubstake."

"That old man who just left here seems to have been staked pretty well."

"That was Jo Boncard. He's got three good teams, which them three sons of his'n drives. An' he pushes 'em. They'll do some good work, puttin' in logs. But he's the hardest to git around an' hold down. He'll jest naturally talk you out of the stuff."

"Well, when once they catch up, I wouldn't let them have any more than the credit for hauling will cover."

"Catch up! They started behind, an' they'll keep slippin' farther behind. A Cajun don't never catch up."

"You're just out of luck then," Sewell said sharply.

"I dunno that I am," Dod drawled. "I makes a pretty good profit. Seems to me I'm kind of lucky."

"You can let these Cajuns get into you as much as you damned please," the boy said, slapping his open hand on the counter for emphasis, his face reddening, "but we will pay the accounts only to the extent of five dollars a thousand, log scale, for what each man puts in."

"I traded with Scott to finance this here proposition," Dod replied, the easy, good natured drawl suddenly gone from his voice. "Each log hauler is goin' to run a open account with me. In course, I'm goin' to hold 'em down as best I kin. But let me tell you somethin', buddy; when time comes for a settlement, I'm goin' to have a check in full for every damn' nickel I've got entered in this here book—" and he slapped his ledger with a resounding whack. "Now you run along an' practise yo' college edication on them Cajuns an' leave the tradin' end of it to me."

Sewell slept in the little office on a cot which he folded up each morning, the bedding being kept on a shelf in a cupboard. He took his meals with Dod and his wife, who before her marriage had been a country school teacher.

The next morning, while the stars were still shining, pandemonium broke out in the ox lot as the Cajuns began to arrive—some of them on foot, some on scrubby little horses—and yoke their beasts. They shouted at their teams, laughed, called to one another. Everywhere about the lot lights were darting. Now and then an ox bawled. To pistol-like cracks from the long whip a cart began moving out.

After a hasty breakfast, Sewell hurried out to the woods where, having been working for several days, his log cutters already had made a good start in the timber. He arrived just ahead of the first slowly moving team, which came creeping in through the forest aisles in the gray light of dawn.

Here he was on familiar ground. Dressed for his work, he wore a campaign hat, khaki shirt, open at the throat, field trousers, laced just below the knee, and heavy boots, rubber soled to hold his footing on the slopes covered with pine needles and for riding logs in the water.

Whatever their other qualities, he soon found that the Cajuns, practising an art with which they had been familiar all their lives, were skilful loggers. The logs, cut in the midst of thickly growing timber, were crossed in every direction, some of them buried beneath the bushy tops. At once each selected his load and began snaking it out of the tangle; or straddling a great log with the wheels of his cart, dropped his chain to embrace it and began hoisting it up beneath the cart with the windlass, operated by a short, stout pole, its end thrust successively into holes in the spool.

He recorded the name of each teamster in his tally book and gave to each his symbol and a stick of marking lead. On the top cuts of each tree from which he hauled the log, the hauler had to place his mark. Some drivers, hauling by contract, are prone to leave the top cuts, which are less profitable to haul, and later refuse to acknowledge that they belonged to the tree from which he hauled the butt log. But with a mark to prove to whom they belonged there was no chance of a mixup.

All the logs of each driver were marked at the landings on the creek, in order that Sewell, when he scaled them and found the contents in each, could credit the footage to the proper name. At the end of each day's work he entered the total footage for each driver in a book in the office. The next morning, he gave a copy of this footage to Dod.

After his clash with the countryman, in which he had been told sharply to mind his end of the business, he had not interfered with Dod. But he was worried. Each morning, Dod rode away on horseback to the river swamps to look after his stave business; but he returned to the store in the evenings, and after they had put up their teams, the Cajuns swarmed in. There were now twenty teams at work. Others had applied; but, without consulting him, Dod had turned them off, telling them he would send them word when they were needed.

EACH evening, every driver would come from the store with a sack of feed on his shoulder for his team, which was fed only once a day, and though some of the teams had been for a time running on the range, picking their living, and were weak when they first started, they strengthened rapidly. They also drew rations and dry goods. Several of them soon were sporting new shoes and hats; their women folk came in and traded. Sewell had no fault to find with the work these people were doing, but he constantly brooded over the fact that, by Dod's own acknowledgment, they were slipping constantly more into debt and there seemed no way to help it, if he were to continue the logging operations.

One day he came in from the woods and went to the store, where Minnie, Dod's little wife, who kept the countryman's accounts for him, was at work on the books.

"Mrs. Simmons," he said respectfully, removing his hat, "aren't some of these log haulers of mine running pretty far behind in their accounts?"

"They're all behind, Mr. Slade, and getting worse all the time. Old Jo Boncard, who runs three teams, is worst of all. He's always after Dod for something. But he's that way. He's pretty well fixed, too. Has a nice place and lots of range cattle and hogs in the woods. They say old Jo is worth at least twenty thousand dollars. But whenever he gets on a job with his teams, he starts in to draw all he can. He got into Sam Bonner so bad two or three years ago that he put Sam out of business."

"Is Dod keeping up with the accounts?" he asked. He didn't wish to let the woman see that he was perturbed.

"He certainly is. I have to keep the credits and the debits figured close every day, and at night he goes over the accounts and figures some more. Of course Dod doesn't discuss his business with me, but I know he's doing all he can to hold them down, and it's just impossible."

That night Sewell came again to the store and sat quietly on a box until Dod could get through waiting on the Cajuns, or, rather, check up on them while they waited on themselves. As before, old Jo Boncard remained until the last.

Calling Dod to one side, the Cajun talked earnestly to him in a low tone. Dod at first protested, apparently refusing to agree. Then with a shrug of his shoulders, he drew a heavy leather wallet from his hip pocket and counted into Jo's waiting hand five ten-dollar bills.

"Now, Jo, you've jest got to hold yo'self down," he said peevishly. "Ain't no use for you to keep tellin' me you're goin' to pull out of the hole. You're already in too deep. I'm warnin' you that I can't stand it much longer. For every dollar's worth of logs yo' teams puts in you wants to draw two dollars worth of credit."

Old Boncard nodded his head solemnly.

"Thank'ee, Mister Simmons; thank'ee. I'll try to do better. Jest had to have a leetle cash. The wimmin folks wants to go to town an' do some tradin'. Thank'ee, suh."

His tone and manner were humble, expressing gratitude. But as he passed out of the store Sewell saw his face break into a sly, cunning smile.

"What did you let that old scoundrel have money for when already he's head over heels in debt?" Sewell asked the storekeeper.

"Oh, they has to have a leetle along. Couldn't navigate 'thout some cash, you know. But don't rub it in. I don't like to let 'em have it. Don't mean a cent of profit to me."

"I overheard you tell him just now that he's drawing nearly double the credits he has in," Sewell said slowly, finding it hard to keep the anger from his voice.

"He's runnin' hog wild. I ain't goin' to stand for it much longer."

"My opinion is that you're either a—" He stopped himself just in time. If he gave expression to the hot rejoinder that trembled on his lips, it perhaps would mean a break between Dod and the Slade brothers that could not be healed.

"What's that you was about to say?" Dod asked, eying him sharply.

"Nothing." Turning on his heel, Sewell left the store.

No wonder these Cajuns were working so hard and unremittingly, he thought gloomily as he made his way through the darkness to the little office. They had such a good thing. With accounts wide open in Dod's store, they apparently drew not only what they wanted in the way of dry goods and rations, but they drew cash as well.

He himself had been working so hard on his end of the operation, starting each morning before dawn and sometimes toiling over his log scales and raft tallies until far into the night. The first raft had been formed in the bayou, the sinkers securely dogged up to the floaters; and the raft was well penned, so that it would not break up. Safely it had been towed down to the mill. The second raft was made. The mill would be ready to begin sawing in a few days. But he saw the inevitable coming when they had to make a settlement with Dod Simmons. He already had spoken to Scott about Dod; but his brother would not pay any attention to him.

"You and I both have our hands full," he told the boy, "and I have every confidence in old Dod and feel that he will handle his end to a T."

When Sewell reached the office he wrote to Scott, expressing the opinion of the storekeeper that had trembled on his lips while talking to Dod himself. He wrote:

> This man Simmons in whom you have so much confidence is either a knave or a fool. Either he is letting these Cajuns get into him on purpose, or he hasn't sense enough to keep them from it. He expects us to pay the accounts, you know, and on every dollar's worth of merchandise he lets them have he makes a nice profit. I hate to keep worrying you about this, Scott. I know that you couldn't have started the business without Dod's help; but something will have to be done. Why, he'll swamp us!

With characteristic brevity Scott replied:

Just keep your shirt on, kid. I reckon Dod knows what he's doing.

About a week later as he stood at the ox lot in the gray dawn watching the teams start for the woods, he was surprised to see Jo Boncard's three sons take up their feed troughs and load them on their carts.

"What does this mean?" he asked the old Cajun sharply.

"Mr. Simmons fired me," the old man said complainingly.

"You mean you're quitting! You got as far behind in your account as he would let you go, and now you're jumping your job."

"He fired me, boss. Told me last night to git my teams an' git t'hell 'way from here."

Sewell hurried to the house and caught Dod just as he had mounted his horse to start for the swamps.

"Do you know that Jo Boncard is quitting?" he asked.

"I fired him. He jest got so far in the hole I couldn't stand it no mo'."

"But how do you expect him to make it up, if you fire him?"

"Don't expect him to make it up. I'm firin' him to keep him from gittin' deeper into debt. In two, three weeks I'll send for him an' let him start all over again, with a clean sheet. In the meantime, they's three mo' teams will be in tonight to take his place. Have to let 'em go, you know, when they gits to the p'int where they're 'bout to eat me plum' up."

To Sewell this seemed about as foolish as the old custom of putting a man in prison because he was in debt.

In a small, ancient car he drove at once down to Mobile and found his brother at the mill, in the shadows beneath the big twin engine feed. Scott came crawling out from the semi-darkness, his face streaked with grease, and lay on his side, resting on his elbow, a wrench gripped in his grimy fist.

"What's the matter, kid? About decided we'd never get this old Jenny ready to run? We're just touching up the fine points now. Get up steam tonight."

Sewell told his brother of the conclusion he had reached in regard to Dod Simmons—that he was convinced Dod was taking advantage of his position to do a big business with the Cajuns and make the Slade brothers pay for it.

"And we've got to pay him, Scott," he finished. "We have no contract with him. He can attach everything we cut at the mill."

"But how do you know Jo Boncard was behind when Dod ran him off? That doesn't sound like Dod."

"I've been watching things up there, Scott. Dod himself said that Jo was so far behind he had to let him go."

Worriedly Scott passed a hand over his forehead, leaving another streak of grease.

"We'll look into this," he said.

AFTER giving instructions to his mechanics, he led the way to the office. When he had washed the grease from his face and hands, he stepped out of his overalls and put on a dark suit which he took from a hanger on the wall. His face was now grimly set.

"I'll go back with you and we'll have a showdown," he said. "I'll ask him for the cost per thousand feet on that first raft. Yes," he kept repeating to himself, "we'll have a showdown."

And presently Sewell began to be apprehensive. He knew how Scott could be when he was aroused.

"Now there's no use in getting all riled over this thing, Scott," he told his brother. "Just look at it from a business standpoint. We'll have a showdown, as you say, then we'll make our readjustments. That old fool won't talk to me, or I might have been able to attend to this myself."

Scott laughed harshly.

"It's not as simple as you think. If Dod is doing what he seems to be, it's a betrayal of trust. I have known him for years and years. We have worked together. I trusted him completely. He knows what getting started in business with you means to me. It was his own

proposition that he finance the logging end of it."

When Scott opened a drawer and took out a flat automatic, Sewell caught his wrist.

"Put that thing back!" he cried.

He struggled with his brother and tried to take the pistol away from him; but Scott threw him aside.

"Just leave this matter to me, Sewell. It's out of your hands now."

"But, Scott, it will ruin everything. Oh, my God! I wish I hadn't told you." He was half sobbing.

"Let's go."

That evening the two brothers watched the Cajuns as they came in and put up their teams, then followed them to the store, where they were thronging as usual. Sewell expected Dod to be embarrassed when Scott appeared; but the fat countryman, with his lazy drawl, seemed glad to see Scott and greeted him affectionately, then excused himself to wait on his trade. There were the usual arguments and the refusal to let the log haulers draw more than about half of the amount they demanded. One of them drew some cash, though the two brothers could hear Dod's protest:

"You're so far behind now, Weg, that you're sunk plum' out of sight. Better watch yo' step, or you'll be follerin' after Jo Boncard."

At last, when the store was clear, they gathered around Dod's little desk, which was home made and breast high, with a stool in front, upon which his wife perched when she worked at the accounts. Scott's eyes were smiling and his voice was soft; but Sewell watched with apprehension the tense, drawn lines about his mouth.

"And how are things coming, Dod?" Scott asked pleasantly.

"Jest fine, old-timer. Couldn't ask for no better. These here log haulers is well satisfied. They're workin' hard an' makin' good money. I'm gittin' a good trade here in the sto', on which I makes a fair profit; an' that's the reason I wouldn't hear to yo' payin' me no intrust for stakin' you-all to a beginnin'. I lets 'em have some cash along. They claims they has to have it for pressin' needs; but I reckin they buries most of it out some place for a rainy day. In course you know from experience that a Cajun don't have no payday. He jest draws what you'll let him have as he goes along.

"An', Scott, I must say that I've changed my opinion 'bout Sewell, here. Why, he's a regular humdinger when it comes to loggin'. I see now where the college edication comes in. It learns a feller to think, even ef it don't learn him nothin' else that's any good. He works out his plans with pencil an' paper 'fo' he ever starts a change in the operations, an' he carries out them plans with system. Them Cajuns is able to accomplish most a third mo', I reckin', by follerin' his orders, which he makes 'em do. When he's learned a little mo' 'bout human nature, he'll be all right."

"I'd like to see the figures on that first raft, if you have them run up," Scott said quietly.

"Oh, they ain't no hurry 'bout that," Dod told him quickly. "You ain't to pay me till the rafts is cut an' the lumber sold, nohow. So don't bother. They's plenty of time."

"But—er—I'd like to sort of keep tab as we go along."

Sewell watched anxiously the ominous tightening of his brother's lips, the unconscious clenching and unclenching of his big hands. He felt that Scott was tense, quietly waiting, and he hoped that it would be necessary to go into the books and figure up the accounts, which would take some time. He was wholly unprepared when Dod said:

"Waal, here it is, then." From between the pages of the ledger he drew a sheet of paper. "Minnie has it all figgered up—the total debits, as represented by the sum of all the sto' accounts an' the cash advanced; the total footage of all timber hauled to the creek. For various an' sunday reasons I've kept the details of this here operation to myself. Do you want me to name it befo' Sewell?

In course he's bound to git on to it, sooner or later."

"Of course! Let's have it—the cost per thousand feet." Some of the tenseness had crept into Scott's voice.

Sewell wondered just how much more per thousand feet than the five dollars, above which they had decided the logs must not go, the cost would run. Perhaps nearly double. Drawing close to Scott's side, he waited.

With tantalizing slowness Dod glanced over the sheet.

"I had figgered that myself; but I think she's got it here, too. Yes, here it is. The total amount of the footage; the total amount of all the accounts; one divided into the other—jes fo' dollars an' sixty-three cents per thousand foot, Scott."

With an involuntary cry, Sewell snatched the sheet of paper from Dod's hand. Minnie was a neat little accountant, and quickly he verified her figures. He looked up in bewilderment.

"I don't see how this can be true!" he declared.

Dod was chuckling, and he winked at Scott. And Scott, that tense expression gone from about his mouth, was smiling. He had placed an affectionate hand on Dod's shoulder.

"That's where a knowledge of human nature comes in," Dod explained. "Them Cajuns knowed, an' I knowed, that they'd git ahead of me right from the start, an' that I couldn't no mo' hold 'em down than I could stop the wind from blowin'. So when I traded with 'em, I told 'em we'd pay 'em two dollars an' a half a thousand foot for haulin' the logs to the water's edge—jest half of what we had decided the logs must cost. I reckin' they'd have took the job for almost nothin', knowin' they'd git ahead of me anyhow. They're gittin' a lot of fun out of this game—an' so am I. Every day Minnie gives me a statemint on each one of 'em, showin' the total footage of the logs he's put in an' the total amount of his account. I has the two dollar an' a half figger to argue with, an' to help me hold 'em down. I begs 'em to be careful in their tradin', as they're gittin' so far behind in their accounts, an' they laughs up their sleeves at me. What they don't know is that I have a peg sot in the five dollar a thousand hole an' when the account of any one of 'em runs so high that his logs reaches an average cost of five dollars, I turns him off, as in the case of Jo Boncard. Can't hold them fellers down no mo' than you kin stop the wind from blowin'."

LORD *of the* VALLEY

By REGINALD CAMPBELL

THE SAMBUR stag gazed down his valley at sunset. The valley was clothed in luscious green grass, though here and there great teak trees and clumps of elfin-like bamboo towered to the sky. The cold weather wind was blowing, and the stag drank deep of the breeze for any scent of danger that might threaten his kingdom.

He loved this valley. It was his by right of conquest, and he clung to this particular slice of territory with all the single minded passion of his race. Being a sambur, he had nothing in common with the smaller kinds of deer that roamed the jungle ranges. *They* moved from one locality to another as it suited them, and though at times they fought fiercely with one another for the possession of a harem, they cared nothing for the country in which they browsed.

But *he*, the sambur, fought solely to keep the mastery of his beloved valley and whatever hinds there might be in it at the time. The hinds, however, were a mere afterthought compared to that rolling strip of jungle in which he had lived for as long as he could remember.

He stood alone now, for the rut was over and, as the shadows deepened, he moved down the ridge to where a tiny stream tinkled among some stones. In spite of his great bulk, he moved delicately, so that not a twig or dry leaf spoke

of his presence. Reaching the rim of the water, he stooped to drink, but a second later he was gone in a flash and the thick grass had swallowed him up once more. One moment he was by the stream, the next he was far up the slope of the valley, and a great tiger, that had been slinking like an oiled shadow toward its prey, gave a cough of disgust and rippled through the gloom to seek an easier victim elsewhere.

Far away up the slope, the stag settled down to feed. He breathed quietly, evenly, and showed no sign of alarm at the recent incident. Not for nothing had he lived for years in the jungle without coming to harm. He had strength, cunning and intelligence, the three great assets in the wilds.

His strength was sufficient to oust any sambur who might challenge his suzerainty, and woe betide any panther who dared to stalk him. The panther would find itself up against ringing hoofs and sharp, pointed antlers thrust with all the force of a powerful neck and body, and few cared to try a second attack upon him. As for the tiger, whose strength was twice that of any panther, the stag's acute sense of smell and hearing enabled him to escape with ease from its slashing claws and teeth.

The stag grazed and browsed quietly all night, then, at dawn, a prolonged roar echoed through the valley. At the sound his mane bristled, and he pawed the ground with his forefeet. Advancing a few paces, he bellowed back, and a few minutes later a young sambur stag came into view and challenged.

The pair locked in combat in a forest clearing. The newcomer was a young stag, proud of his growing strength and yearning to own a whole valley for himself. But from the start he was hopelessly outfought. The huge bulk of the older animal, the terrible antlers, the experience of a hundred different fights, soon drove the youngster from the clearing, leaving the victor in sole possession of his kingdom.

The sambur slept through the heat of the day, then, on cresting the brow of a hill toward sunset, he beheld a sight that froze him to the alert. In a hollow two hundred yards below him smoke was rising, and some tents dotted the surface of the ground. Humans had come into his domain, and he snorted in dismay, for these were his greatest enemies and the hardest of all animals to deal with. With every muscle strung taut, he remained motionless until one of the humans emerged from a tent and sighted him. For the space of ten seconds they gazed at one another, then in one clean bound the stag vanished into the gloom of the coming night.

CARSON, the forest officer, gave vent to a low whistle of amazement, and lightning calculations flitted through his brain. He might be wrong, of course, but from the brief glimpse he had had of the sambur, he reckoned it must stand a good five feet at the shoulder and weigh three times as much as the heaviest man. The horns, too, were about fifty inches in length and would doubtless constitute a record head for Siam. Well—his tour of forest inspection was at an end, and he'd spend the whole of this Christmas week in rounding up and bagging that stag. He therefore called for his old Siamese headman, who presently bowed low before him.

"Ai Keo," said he, pointing to the ridge, "thou hast seen?"

"Lord," answered the old man, "I have seen, yet my eyes are weak and without doubt have betrayed me, for never have I beheld such a sambur."

Carson smiled with satisfaction, for his own opinion was thus confirmed.

"Thine eyes did not betray thee," he told the ancient, "and tomorrow we hunt that stag."

"As the lord wills," said the little headman meekly. "What are his commands?"

Carson paused before replying. The valley in which they were camped was some ten miles long, and from his experience of sambur he knew that the stag was likely to remain in the locality however

much it might be hunted. This naturally simplified matters, and he therefore decided to organize a coolie drive.

"Tomorrow, Ai Keo, thou shalt spread out thy men across the watershed, then make them advance noisily up to the head of the valley, so that they drive everything before them."

"And the lord himself will wait at the head of the valley?" queried Ai Keo.

"He will not," replied Carson. "He will follow up behind the line of beaters. Ai Keo, dost thou not know that usually stags break back through the line, only to be shot by the guns in the rear?"

But Ai Keo seemed doubtful.

"Master," said he, "that may be so, yet it seems that much luck will be needed in this enterprise, for you are the only one with a rifle, and is not the valley broad?"

"It is," said Carson, "but luck, my friend, is part of the successful hunter's outfit."

Ai Keo then withdrew, and the white man set about cleaning his double barreled rifle.

Next morning the stag heard the sound of voices and tapping sticks invading his precious solitudes. Accordingly, he moved slowly away from the sound and up the valley, but the humans persisted in following, and soon he sought the wildest and most inaccessible parts of his domain. Here he settled down to sleep—the night was the time for feeding and exercise—but in less than thirty minutes he was on his feet and once more moving away from his enemies.

Now the valley was interspersed with numerous gulleys and ravines which were little valleys in themselves, and up and down these he toiled in the full heat of the blistering sun. Being a shade loving creature, he hated this, but on he went till three o'clock in the afternoon, by which time he had reached the end of his territory. He then decided to turn and charge, but by now the humans themselves had had enough. They were dead weary with the fearful going, and of the stag they had not caught a glimpse. Their camp lay miles behind them, and at a brief command from Carson the coolies thankfully began the long journey back to their tents. The stag then rested, and when night fell grazed slowly down the valley again.

Two hours after dawn the following day he scented a solitary human approaching him. He withdrew into cover behind a thick clump of bamboo and watched. He saw a white man carrying a rifle move cautiously past him and proceed up to the head of the valley. When the man had disappeared the stag dozed, but presently he was startled by the sound of beaters working up to him from the direction of the camp. This time, however, he did *not* retreat before them; he sensed that above and ahead of him danger threatened in the shape of the solitary man he had seen earlier in the morning, and he therefore waited till the beaters came into view. His head held high, he stood absolutely motionless, and presently a scattered line of coolies swam into his vision, whereupon he lowered his head and charged straight at the center man.

The line scattered to right and left before him, and the tip of one great antler missed the flying form of the headman by a matter of inches. Stopping his charge abruptly, he whirled round to see that the men were frantically climbing trees. Shouting and yelling, they were swarming up tree trunks like so many monkeys and, in spite of his desire to be left in peace, for the moment he was mastered by the innate curiosity of his race.

Treading delicately, he moved from tree to tree, staring up at these humans perched so high above him. They shrieked and gesticulated, but did not seem so very formidable, and after awhile he left them on their perches and sought out a cool and shady spot near the bank of a little stream. He then slept peacefully for the rest of the day.

ABOUT four o'clock that afternoon, while the stag still slumbered, an angry white man walked into his camp. Since the stag had not broken back on the previous day, Carson had decided to alter his

tactics. He had therefore gone up to the head of the valley at dawn, after leaving instructions with the headman for the coolies to drive the animal up to him. Having selected a point that gave him a commanding view, he had then waited for hour after hour in the full heat of the tropical sun, yet neither stag nor beaters had appeared, and at last he had been forced to abandon the vigil and return to camp.

He called for Ai Keo, the headman.

"What is this?" he began angrily, but the ancient cut him short.

"Lord," said Ai Keo, "this morning we did beat up the valley according to your Honor's orders, but misfortunes came upon us thick and fast. The stag, he did break back this time and, *wooi!* he was the size of twelve whole stags in one." Ai Keo waved his skinny arms. "Beneath the thunder of his hoofs the earth shook, and flame did issue from his nostrils. Never have I seen the like of it before."

"I can well believe that," said the white man dryly. "And what did Ai Keo do then?"

"Lord, I and the others did seek trees, being very much afraid of this monster. Yet even then he did pursue us, raging round the foot of the trees in a manner that turned the bravest of us pale. Nor did he leave us for one whole hour, at the end of which time we were very, very tired, so we sought the safety of the camp again."

"Tomorrow," said Carson after a pause, "I stalk that sambur alone. I have no need for monkeys to help me in the chase."

"Master, I like it not," prompted the old man earnestly. "I think that stag not meant to die, for verily it is the god of all stags. I think that much evil will come to master if he try to kill it."

"Nonsense," said Carson shortly, and the interview was ended.

To obtain as much rest as possible, he went to bed early, and as soon as the first light of day filtered through the forest he sprang through his mosquito net and dressed hastily. He loaded both barrels of his rifle and, after slipping a packet of sandwiches and some spare cartridges into the side pockets of his jungle tunic, set out on the trail.

After several hours' fruitless stalking he came upon signs that showed him the stag could not be far distant, and shortly afterward he sighted it. Luckily for him, it was standing in a patch of comparatively open jungle and, since the wind blew directly toward him, it had not scented his presence. The range was long, a good three hundred yards, but he decided not to risk a closer approach in case the direction of the wind should change. The slightest noise, too, might come to the stag's sharp ears, and he therefore lowered himself to the ground and took aim with the utmost care.

The rifle roared, but the stag was gone in a flash, leaving him no time to discharge his second barrel. An oath rose to his lips; then, reloading as he ran, he hastened to the spot where the animal had been standing. Arrived there, he hissed with satisfaction. Blood was on the earth nearby, and a thin dribble of it led away to the northward. The stag was therefore wounded, and it was now only a matter of time for him to hunt it down.

With his rifle at the trail, Carson began to follow up the spoor. There was plenty of blood to guide him, though this told him nothing of the condition of the animal, for he knew well that often the worst wounds bled internally and left no tracks whatever on the ground. With this in mind, he pushed forward as fast as he could, and soon the lust of the hunt made him oblivious of the country to left and right of him. He saw only a thin, red trickle which beckoned him on and on and on.

Presently the trail led down a particularly steep ravine, into which he plunged recklessly. His foot caught in a creeper, and he was flung headlong down the slope. The rifle slipped from his grasp, while he himself rolled over and over till a large, prickly bush arrested his progress.

An angry hum rose up around him, and

he found the air alive with the small, yellow wasps whose nest he had disturbed. He struggled desperately to get free of the bush, but his tunic was held by thousands of tiny, clinging thorns, and the more he fought the worse his predicament became. Sharp stabs of pain pierced his neck and hands and, finally, in order to save himself from being stung literally to death, he wriggled out of the tunic and left it on the thorns. Once clear, he bolted up the ravine, retrieved his rifle, then turned and gazed at the bush.

The wasps were still humming angrily, and he knew that he must give up the tunic as lost. Yet in its pockets were all his spare cartridges. For a while he hesitated, then, knowing that both barrels of his rifle were loaded, he left the tunic where it was and pushed rapidly on the trail of the sambur.

HALF a mile farther on a sharp hiss came from some dense scrub ahead on his right, yet so intent was he on the hunt that he did not grasp the significance of the warning. He made no attempt at a detour, but went straight on past the hidden death, and after another four hundred yards' progress some sixth sense told him that he was nearing his quarry. He now proceeded much more cautiously, and on reaching the bank of a jungle stream he came full upon the stag.

Though he himself was screened by the thick vegetation growing on the bank, the stag was standing out in the open in a deep pool which lay at the foot of a tinkling waterfall. The rushing of the waterfall had undoubtedly drowned any slight noise he might have made in his approach, while the wind also was favorable; thus sheer luck had enabled him to get within twenty yards of the unsuspecting animal.

Very, very slowly he raised his rifle, but when his eye ran along the barrel he hesitated before pulling the trigger. The range was pointblank, and absolute murder if he fired, yet he could hardly retreat and give the stag a sporting chance at a longer range, for if he withdrew a distance of only a few yards the denseness of the jungle would effectually blot out the target.

He lowered his rifle, and frowned. He was a sportsman, always had been a sportsman, and he felt justly proud of the fact. To murder the stag would break the unwritten law of the hunter, and yet—torn between conflicting emotions, he gazed at his quarry, which still stood motionless.

A red wound, where his glancing bullet had struck, showed on the stag's left shoulder, but elsewhere the brown hide was smooth and glossy in spite of the grueling chase. The large eyes were soft and liquid, and above the noble head the great horns curved in perfect symmetry. From shapely feet to tip of antler the stag was the embodiment of wild beauty, and Carson felt a stab of compunction run through his heart.

Beauty should live, not die, and what was that the old headman had said? It was a god among stags, not meant to be killed, and evil fortune would attend the slayer.

A sudden, mad resolve came to Carson. He had spent countless hours in rounding up the stag, and now it was his he would let it go. Without an instant's delay, in case he should change his mind, he plunged out into the open and for one unforgettable second man and beast stared at one another. Then, in one great effortless sail, the stag vanished into the scrub that clothed the farther bank of the stream, and Carson was left alone.

For a full five minutes he gazed at the spot where it had disappeared, then with a self-conscious laugh he swung on his heel and began the long journey back to camp. Already he was beginning to curse himself for a fool, but by now the sun was low in the sky and there was no time left to renew the chase that day. He would sleep the night through, he reflected, and depend on his morning mood as to whether he would leave the stag in peace or not.

Intent on his thoughts, he moved rapidly through the jungle, but when he had

put a few hundred yards between him and the stream, he heard an angry hiss that now brought him instantly to the alert. With his rifle at the ready, he took a cautious step forward, whereupon the death, disturbed for the second time that afternoon, came at him like a slaty black flash.

At the sight of the horror, sheer panic caused him to fire prematurely, with the result that his bullet missed the small wicked diamond shaped head by a foot or more. On and on came the thing, pouring over the ground with lightning speed, and not until it was within six feet of him did he fire his last remaining cartridge. The head, blown off more by the charge than by the bullet, was shattered into a hundred pieces, leaving a long body that writhed and twisted in ghastly, nauseating coils.

When at last it lay still, Carson wiped the sweat from his forehead with a shaking hand. Unwittingly he had disturbed the retreat of a hamadryad, the great king cobra who, unlike other snakes, will attack on the slightest provocation; whose speed can rival that of a galloping horse, and whose bite is instant death. And Carson, as he gazed down at the horror, felt a sob of thankfulness choking in his throat.

He had spared the stag's life, and with the cartridges thus left him saved his own.

* * *

The stag stood on the brow of a hill, watching his broad valley below. Far down the slope he saw humans moving, little dots that now and then rose above the early morning mist. They disappeared from sight, and he snuffed the breeze, once more untainted by the smell of men animals.

He pawed the ground and let forth a great challenge that crashed and echoed through the jungle clad ravines. No answer came to him.

TENERIFFE

By LEWIS J. RENDEL

YESTERDAY morning they said we had "raised the loom of the land!" Having approached so many low lying coasts, I looked for a darker line along the horizon and failed to find it. It was much later that a chance glance revealed a darker blue hanging vastly in the high skies. Teneriffe goes a full twelve thousand feet right up from the sea edge.

All day it hung above our plodding freight tub, not altering in shape, but taking on color, shadow and solidity. Evening brought a cape, darkly barren against the sunset, screaming with gulls. It swung back to show an open roadstead and a town climbing up from it like a pink and yellow stairway. The orderly commotion in the steamer's middle faded to sudden silence. She forged silently ahead until a rattle of anchor chains checked her way. A red lamp winked on a stone mole; stars perched like beacon fires on the top of a black ridge.

No one knows how long we shall be here in Santa Cruz. The captain is surly because I refused to stop at the Pino de Oro as his guest. He is an aloof man, bearded in imitation of King George, whom he thinks he resembles. One suspects him of being, behind his executive

apartness, shy and secretly lonely. He has that type's habit of blundering advances and tendency to be hurt. He retrieves his dignity by refusing information. Meanwhile one wanders the town and listens for a siren warning departure.

Many of the streets are so steep as to be grown with grass now yellowed by drought. Pastel tinted houses, green shutters, balconies spilling sunstruck roses. Then row on row of lesser hovels, mere stone cubes, flush with the cobbled street, that climb up in ascending steps. The only level ground is the terraces dug out from the slopes. Vines brilliant in spring green, patches of tomatoes or dwarf bananas; and everywhere twisted masses of the prickly pears, relics of the old-time industry in cochineal. A low wall is flecked by olive shade. One stretches on its top, soaking one's back in the sunshine, thankful to be again safely south. It is good to feel those months of London grit and east wind finally melting from one's bones.

It is nearly sunset and this eastern half of the island is already darkening. From this height Santa Cruz is like colored cheese cubes set in endive, the anchored vessels like tiny water beetles. Sixty miles away Gran Canaria rises above the ocean rim, a vast pink pearl, veined with ineffable blue. So clear is the air that a single town stands whitely out in the day's last ray.

One wonders at that town, so extraordinarily remote, to be approached only by ship, or over the sawtooth trails of the seven thousand foot Las Canyadas. One would like to go there and stay a long time. Surely there must be peace among these white walls hung between the breathless sky and a sea of darkening amethyst. But it is only that strange lure of distance. From the slopes above that town this Santa Cruz would stand out, in dawn light, with just as aching a promise. As for peace, it is something apart from place. The most peaceful person I ever saw was a woman carrying a baby, among the refugees in a London tube station on a night of air raid. One will never go to that unknown white town. But it will always be remembered as one of those things longed for—but not longed for quite enough.

Spanish towns need the moon. Its cold light turns the yellow and pink housefronts to coral and topaz, with the shadows of banana fronds blue across them. The sputtering arc light at the corner turns it all to theatrical scenery.

Black shawled women pass slowly, with great mournful eyes, in long, lemon tinted faces. The men are a rather Levantine looking riffraff, save for some country lads, brown and grave in blue cotton clothing. A faint reek of sewage comes up through the scent of orange bloom.

There is a high terrace above the town, where water drips in a stone basin and fallen oleander petals are like blood upon the dust. The mountain airs are flowing down from the ridge, cool and dry. In the town below, the few smoke wreaths drift seaward. A tiny fort, all battlements and pasted-on pepper box turrets, sweeps a searchlight across the roadstead.

One breathes relief at escape from the hotel lobby, where English people of that strange sort which haunts winter resorts sit around and make noises like conversation. The women are mostly spinsters, a trifle decayed. The males are of that futile sort known as "perfect gentlemen." Their only excuse for existence seems to be that each has a certain amount of money to spend upon himself. They are all much oppressed with thought of possible labor upheaval—"these terrible Reds"—and the wiping out of their sources of income. But none are attempting to fit themselves in any way to cope with the feared crash.

One remembers the words of a wise man one encounters on the edge of a western desert—

"Live every day as if it were your last."

I quoted that to one of those apprehensive ladies. She looked up from her hideous fancy work and said:

"Oh—but really, you know, one couldn't do *that*— What would one do the *next* day?"

Then she came back at me with all the archness of gray curls.

"Do you?" she asked.

A Narrative of the

The LOST CRUSADE

By HAROLD LAMB

WINTER mist covered the gray Tiber and drifted through the thick ilex trees by the brown basilica of St. Peter. But the sun beat down upon the mist, and the throngs of men and women could see clearly all that took place in front of the bronze doors. They had stood there for a long time, very patiently.

All their eyes were fastened on a slight figure seated under the portico, sheltered from both the mist and the sun. It was a small man, the face sharp and handsome, the gray eyes set close together. Ordinarily this man moved quickly and spoke, as they knew well, most eloquently. A few moments ago he had been Cardinal Lothaire, of the familiar Roman house of Conti. No more than thirty-seven years of age, and a distinguished Christian gentleman, thoroughly versed in matters of law and mysteries of the councils.

Now the episcopal mitre had been taken from his head and the princely tiara put on him.

"Take the tiara," a voice from the red circle of cardinals announced "and know that thou art the father of princes and kings, the ruler of the world, the vicar on earth of our Savior Jesus Christ, whose honor and glory shall endure through all eternity."

Other voices murmured a response. The crowd jostled and peered, while the men at arms thrust them back and horses were led up. One of them was covered with scarlet trappings. And when the figure rose from the chair and mounted this horse, the crowd all saw that, without doubt, Cardinal Lothaire had become the pope, Innocent III.

A priest bearing a cross took his place before the horse. The white and gold standard of good St. Peter was lifted, while twelve guards ranged themselves on either side the new Pope. Images of cherubim hung from their uplifted lances. Their horses sidled and snuffled, pawing the earth under the folds of the heavy embroidered caparisoning.

Behind the Pope the nobles of Rome, bearing their shields of arms, jostled and whispered as they took their places, pushing ahead of rivals who were their feudal enemies on ordinary days. Knights in armor brought up the rear of the glittering cortège, and the watching crowd murmured its delight at all this splendor. Suddenly the bells of St. Peter's clanged and echoed.

The horses moved forward at a foot pace, while the high voices of young boys soared against the clanging of the bells. The choir marched in the procession. But the eyes of the crowd fastened greedily upon a horseman in black velvet, a

Iron Men and Saints

gold chain about his neck. He was the chamberlain of the new Pope, and from time to time he would put his hand into a stout wallet that hung from his saddle horn. Then he would raise his hand and scatter coins among the straining figures of the multitude. Ragged men struggled over the silver coins, and the men at arms thrust them back.

When the procession passed the face of a low building of dull wood the crowd roared with excitement and rage. An old man in a purple robe came out of the strange building, escorted by soldiers. His trembling hands held above his square cap a roll of parchment covered with a veil.

The crowd knew that this was the rabbi of the synagogue, bearing on his head the veiled roll of the Pentateuch. Before

the scarlet horse the old Jew bent his head. He was asking, as the rabbis had always asked, the mercy and protection of the new Pope; but in the shouting of the throng his voice was lost.

The young father of the church looked into the faded eyes of the Hebrew and uttered a few words of forgiveness. When he opened his lips the crowd fell silent, and when he had spoken voices shouted approval. The chamberlain tossed out coins again, and men jostled the rabbi in the purple robe to get at them. Leaning on their spears, the soldiers paid no more heed to him.

Burning through the mist, the sun gleamed upon the princely cavalcade as it reached the muddy bank of the river and paced slowly across the marble bridge leading to the island and the other shore.

An hour later Innocent III sat in state in his Lateran palace. He wore now a red girdle. From the girdle hung two heavy purple purses, smelling of musk. In the purses were gold pieces and the twelve ancient seals of precious stones.

One after the other, the members of his new court and council approached the Pope sitting apart in his porphyry chair. They knelt before him to kiss the ring upon his white hand. And the face of Innocent was wan and tired before the last had withdrawn at the hour of candle lighting, and he could pray alone in the chapel of the Popes, kneeling on the mosaic floor.

Beyond the darkening embrasures of the Lateran, the fortified towers of the nobles stood against the evening sky. Even the impassive Colosseum was a fortress, and under the chapel and the walls of the gray Lateran soldiers paced. and spear tips shone in the dusk.

Alone, Innocent meditated, in his hand the invisible key that could unlock all gates. Now at last, at his command was the dread authority of the church itself.

Within his mind Innocent was shaping a new empire. He had his fingers upon the threads of happenings—he knew the different peoples and their desires and the roads that the merchants followed. He knew what fleets were built and why and where. For he had eyes that served him—his legates at the courts of kings, and his messengers in the palaces of the pagans. Letters brought to the Lateran all conceivable tidings. Innocent knew what the king of the savage Hungarians said at table, off there in the East, and what merchandise the Venetians sold in Alexandria.

With these threads he was weaving the warp of his new empire. He meant to bring the lands of the earth under the authority of the court of Rome. Many of the lands, of course, yielded spiritual authority to Rome, but Innocent's ambition desired more than that. *All* authority must be his—who was prince as well as Pope.

So he planned.

"As the moon gets her light from the sun," he proclaimed, "so the royal power derives its dignity from the Papal authority."

Innocent was sustained by an unswerving will and inexhaustible energy; he allowed no obstacle to turn him aside. "Any evil may be endured to gain a worthy result."

But in the beginning a task confronted him. He came to the Papal throne with Jerusalem lost, the long treasured cross in the hands of the Moslems, the Crusaders clinging to the coast of the Holy Land, their backs to the sea. Throughout Christendom the cry for the relief of Jerusalem rang clear.

"Aid for the Sepulchre!"

In the ears of the new Pope the cry echoed. He was head of the Christians—he must redeem Jerusalem. Richard the Lion Heart lay in his grave, while Barbarossa had died on the road to the East, and Barbarossa's son had perished in the moment of taking to the sea with a fresh Crusade of Germans.

The new Pope did not hesitate. Victory in the war would be the keystone of the arch at which he labored. To raise a fresh host of Crusaders, to recapture Jerusalem, would be to exalt the Papacy

over the power of kings. The soldiers of the cross would be soldiers of the church for the time, and the invisible empire of Rome would march again into the East.

"I hold nearest my heart," he said in a great council, "the delivery of the Holy Land."

Inexorably, he threw himself into the preparation of the new Crusade, sparing his clergy no more than laymen, and himself least of all. He sent his eyes and ears afield—his cardinals journeyed to the Syrian coast; he wrote to the Armenians, and called for reports from the Templars.

Disciplined men waited in the commanderies of the Temple, to guide the new army on its course; fleets lay in the harbors of the Italian merchant republics. Only the army itself was needed—twenty thousand men, perhaps, would suffice. For Saladin lay in his tomb—Al Adil had withdrawn to Caira in Egypt—and the divided Moslem princes could not withstand a new invasion. So Innocent reasoned.

Just before Christmas of the year 1199 word came to the Lateran palace that the army was mobilizing. A simple French *curé* at a tournament in Ecry-sur-Aisne had roused men to take the cross as once Peter the Hermit had done.

The great count Thibault of Champagne took the cross, and Louis of Blois, with the redoubtable Simon of Montfort. Even young girls had gone among the knights offering crosses to them. Baldwin, count of Flanders, took the pledge, with Marie his wife and that youthful paladin Henry, his brother. And before long the knighthood of southern Germany joined the cross bearers.

They began making ready for the march and Innocent knew that his Crusade was launched.

But the arming and outfitting took time. A route must be decided upon. Venice was chosen as the rendezvous. And the chivalry of France, always impetuous, hastened to send chevaliers to the city of the lagoons to arrange for transport over the sea. They did not haggle over terms and they signed a one-sided agreement.

For the transport of 4,500 knights and their horses, 9,000 esquires and 20,000 foot sergeants the Crusaders undertook to pay the Venetians 85,000 silver marks and to yield to the Venetians one half of all the land they conquered. The treaty only stipulated that the army was to be transported in ships beyond the sea, and no mention was made of the coast of the Holy Land. And this treaty, so lightly signed, shaped the destinies of living men and shook the foundation of Innocent's empire.

Meanwhile the Crusaders were on the march. In bands following seigneur and captain, they threaded through the valleys toward the flat Venetian plain. With lance and pack and sword they tramped through the dust of the summer roads, and their songs brought people to the doors of the hamlets.

Good men—they were going to set Jerusalem free. The first to set out, the élite of the armed hosts, well horsed, well led and sure. So they sang, for the valleys to hear. And, singing, they came to the swamps of Venice.

IT WAS then the end of summer—the summer of 1202. An unwonted bustle filled the canals, where the watermen pushed at the long oars of barges and the slim gondolas of the nobles slipped beneath the screened balconies of ramshackle wooden houses. A damp breath came from the mosquito infested swamps, in the long evening hours when the merchants of the Rialto closed their shops and gathered upon the stone bridges where lanterns hung.

From the balconies women watched, veiled and painted and guarded by eunuchs behind barred doors where the air was heavy with the scent of sandal and musk. For the lords of Venice were half Asiatic in their tastes, and they had found women to their liking in the ports of Greece and the mountains of Circassia.

The merchants on the bridges wore

doublets and cloaks of velvet and brocades of Damascus. They talked under their breath of prices over the seas, in the slave market of Tana, and in the silk *souk* of Alexandria. Some of them knew the worth of furs in the land of darkness where the Hyperboreans dwelt, but all of them held nearest their hearts the secret privileges of trade, and written treaties that no court had ever seen.

For they were tasting a new and delightful power that had been born of the sea.

By the stone edge of the Riva dei Schliavoni clustered the shadows of ships, the high masts and the slanting yards tipping drowsily from side to side under the pulse of the swell. Bound thwart to thwart, the slender war galleys lay moored to great painted piles. Grotesque woman heads peered from the lofty prows in the glimmer of the mooring lanterns.

In the harbor of the arsenal lay new galleys waiting like inanimate sea serpents to be launched forth upon destruction. Over them towered the dromonds, with heavy square sails, and room in their depths for five hundred men or more. These were the transports of the soldiery. Giant busses attended them—pot bellied sailing craft as high as the dromonds, some of them weighing all of five hundred tons. They had two or three masts, and no oars. Along their decks were ranged the timbers of siege engines and the barrels and hemp sacks that held the stores.

Lesser craft lay moored around these giants of the sea—broad shallow craft to carry horses and fodder; flat bottomed *barbotes*, or lighters, to land men and horses upon the shore.

Men had labored for months at the quays to outfit this armada, which was great and strong indeed. For the first time the Venetians were going to carry an army oversea in their vessels, and it was whispered along the waterfront that the fighting craft of the republic would sail with the Crusaders.

Even at night the alleys and the canals were astir. Crusaders in mantle and tunic strolled over the bridges, pausing to enter a chapel to pray, or sitting down on the benches of a wineshop to eye the veiled shapes of the passing women. Wine cooled the blood, and made it possible to sleep in this lifeless air. And presently there would be no more taverns, and no more women.

By the doors of the palaces fiddles whined and beggars pressed forward to cry for alms whenever they caught sight of the broad shoulders and clipped beard and long ringlets of a French lord.

In the open square in front of the domes of St. Mark's the Crusaders lingered to make the most of the nights that remained to them on shore. They strolled along the piazza, staring into open doorways, hailing comrades from the valley of the Aisne or the fields of Flanders. They wore light linen mantles and long hose, for they had left their armor in the barracks of St. Nicholas island.

They talked impatiently of the long delays. Most of the chevaliers had emptied their purses during the months on the road, and had borrowed from those who still had silver in their wallets. Only a few bought the rare embroidered silks and the cleverly worked gold images of the Venetian shops, to send back by courier or Jew to the girls at home.

They were all eager to be aboard ship and on the way to the Holy Land. The Flemings who had departed long since must be there by now, and many Crusaders had failed to appear at the rendezvous. The chevaliers did not wish to wait any longer, because they felt assured that they—the chivalry of the Loire and the Rhine—would be able to fight their way to the Holy City.

So they idled through the warm nights while the ships rocked gently against the stone embankment, and the bells of St. Mark's summoned them to the hours of prayer.

One of them, the young castellan of Coucy, passed the time in his quarters, composing a song. Humming under his breath, he traced words carefully upon a stiff parchment—for this was an important love song, to his wife.

"Beau sire Dieu, how may I endure
To leave the comfort and the courtesy
Of my lady, whose sweet allure,
Made her my delight and belle amie."

He had all of a ministrel's skill, the sieur de Couçy, and he was very earnest in making this song.

"Beau sire Dieu, now must I complain
That she no more may comfort me,
Where I must go. No love will be
Like hers, that may not be mine again."

At the same time an elder man, one Geoffrey of Ville-Hardouin, was writing down the happening of the Crusade. He was a soldier, a simple mind, and a very honest gentleman. He was, besides, marshal of Champagne, so that he sat in the council of the leaders and came to know of the bargain that was made at this time in Venice.

"SO THE count Louis," Villa-Hardouin wrote, "and the other barons were received with a great fête and great joy, and were lodged with the others in the island of Saint Nicholas. Fine indeed was the army and the valiant men; never did any one ever see so many people, nor finer. And the Venetians furnished them with a trading place good and sufficient where everything could be bought for the horses and soldiery, and the fleet that they had made ready was so rich and fine that no Christian ever beheld better, with galleys and barges enough for three times as many men as we had.

"Ah, what a pity that the others who went to different ports did not come there! The Venetians had kept their agreement very well, and now they bade the counts and the barons keep their part of the agreement and pay the money, for they were ready to set sail.

"So the passage money was sought in the army. There were many who said that they could not pay their passage, and the barons took from them what they were able to pay. When everything was paid and collected, they had only half the sum needed.* Then the barons talked together and said:

"'Seigneurs, the Venetians have kept their promise, and more; but we are too few to make up the sum of money agreed on for our passage. For God, then, let each of us give what he can, to make good our promise. Because, if this army does not sail, the conquest of *Outremer* must fail.'

"Then there was a great disagreement, for the larger party of the barons said, 'We have paid for our passage, and if they are willing to take us, very well, if they are not willing, we will call quits and go to some other port.' And the other party said, 'We would rather put in all our wealth, and go ahead poor than to see the army separate and break up.'

"Then the count of Flanders began to pay in all that he had and all that he could borrow, and the count Louis did the same, and the marquis and the count of St. Paul. You would have seen many fine vessels of gold and silver carried to the house of the Doge, to make up the payment. And when all had paid thus, 34,000 marks of silver were still lacking of the sum agreed on.

"Then the Doge spoke with his people, saying to them, 'Seigneurs, these men can not pay more, and all that they have paid belongs to us by the agreement. But our right to it would not be recognized everywhere and we would be blamed —we and our state. So we ought to compromise with them. The king of Hungary has taken from us the great city of Zara, in Slavonia† which is a most strong city, and never with all our efforts will we be able to recover it from him, unless by the aid of these men. We should demand that they aid us to conquer Zara, and we will give them a respite for the 34,000 marks that they owe us, until God permits us to gain it together—we and they, together.'

*Some of the contingents of Crusaders had gone elsewhere, and the army at Venice lacked some 10,000 of the expected number. So it had to make up the passage money of the absent bands —and 85,000 marks of silver was a huge sum.

†Zara lay within Hungary, and it does not appear that the king took it from the Venetians. Rather, the Venetians wished to take it themselves. Honest Ville-Hardouin had no suspicion of the plan of the Venetians at first, and afterward he was involved himself.

"So the agreement was made. It was strongly opposed by those who wished to divide the army, but soon the accord was made and approved. Then every one assembled round the church of St. Mark's. It was a very great fête. The people of the country were there, and the larger part of the barons and pilgrims. Before the mass began, the Doge of Venice, who was named Henry Dandolo, mounted the lectern and spoke to his people, saying:

"'Seigneurs, you are joined together with the best man in the world in the highest undertaking that ever has been planned. I am an old man, and feeble, and I have great need of repose, and I am crippled in my body, but I see that not one of you knows how to command as well as I, who am your lord. If you wish to have me take the cross to safeguard and direct you, while my son remains in my place and cares for the country, I will go forth to live or die with you and with the pilgrims.'

"When they heard that, they cried with one voice:

"'We pray you, for God, to grant this and do it, and come with us!'

"Great was then the sympathy of the people of that country and of the pilgrims, for this valiant man had the best of reasons to remain behind. For he was old, and could scarcely see—since he had lost his sight from a wound on the head. He was of great heart.

"He descended after that from the lectern and knelt before the altar. They clothed him with the cross, on the back of a great cotton cloak—for he wanted the people to see it. And the Venetians began to take the cross in great numbers. Out pilgrims had joy and sympathy by reason of this cross that he took, because of the wisdom and prowess that he had in him.

"Thus was the Doge signed with the cross.

"Then they began to make over the galleys and the barges to the barons. So much time had passed that it was near to September."

UNKNOWN to the Crusaders, Dandolo had urgent reasons of his own for joining the army. Before taking the cross the blind Doge had wind of a conspiracy.

"It was," said Ville-Hardouin, "one of the strangest happenings and greatest adventures of which you have ever heard."

A messenger came to the Doge with whispered tidings—a tale to warm the brain of the blind man. Far to the east lay the last stronghold of ancient Rome, a city that had endured through the dark ages like an island rising above an engulfing flood. Some called it Constantinople, and others Byzantium. Apart from the barbarians of Europe it had endured unchanged for centuries. Mighty walls guarded its wealth and agile minds defended the walls, while the Byzantines wrangled and shrugged their shoulders at events. At need, they purchased peace, and went on with their garden feasts. Attila and his host and the wild Arabs had stormed at the walls of Constantinople in vain.

All this Dandolo knew well. He had heard of a palace revolution that had cast the old emperor of Byzantium—Isaac the Angel—into prison and blinded him. And now, it seemed, Alexis, the son of Isaac, had escaped from prison.

The youthful Alexis had fled to the west, taking refuge at the court of Philip of Swabia, the Hohenstaufen—Philip who had married a Byzantine princess, Isaac's daughter.

Alexis appealed to his brother-in-law for aid in regaining Constantinople. A tempting project—for the Hohenstaufen had dreamed of such a move since the days of Barbarossa. But Philip's hands were tied by troubles in Germany and the enmity of Innocent. He could not send an armed host into the East.

Alexis journeyed to Rome with his shabby elegance and his small entourage of Greek nobles; he gained an audience with Innocent, and found that the great Pope would not intercede for him. After this Alexis returned to Philip's court.

He found there, awaiting him, a most able diplomat in a friendly mood—Boniface of Montserrat, who also had married one of the much desired princesses of Byzantium. The three of them discussed the situation, planning ways and means to lead an army against Constantinople.

Philip would support such an undertaking, and would profit by it, but could not share in it; Alexis would be the figurehead of the invasion—the son of the dethroned emperor—and Boniface was willing enough to have a finger in the pie. They all knew the wealth of Constantinople, and the weakness of its defenders. Here was a world prize, ready for the plucking! But how to go about it? How to raise an army?

How they pondered the question and what they said, we do not know. We are certain only that they were there together—the luxury loving Alexis, the swarthy, eager Boniface, and the dour, silent Hohenstaufen. The Byzantine prince would make any promise, to be installed as ruler of Constantinople—his blind father could not rule again. All of them had the same thought—that an army was already mobilizing near at hand. They were thinking, of course, of the Crusaders. Boniface had just been chosen leader of the Crusade.

If they could turn the Crusaders aside to invade Byzantium, then Constantinople could be seized. The Crusaders themselves, however, would refuse to go anywhere but toward Jerusalem.

Just who thought of the Venetians first is unknown. It might have been Alexis, or Boniface, or Philip. Or the Venetians themselves may have suggested the plan.

The city of the lagoons was gathering to itself little by little the islands that once had formed the chains of the sea empire of Byzantium—while the Byzantines raged against them, calling them "sea serpents." The quarrel between the two cities was an old quarrel.

At all events the messenger rides from the court of Swabia with sealed letters from the conspirators. He tries guardedly to bargain with the Crusaders, who listen with appreciation to the tale, and reply that they would like to voyage to Constantinople *after* they have captured Jerusalem*.

Then the messenger sits with Dandolo behind closed curtains, and no chronicler relates their words. The shrewd Venetian ponders the difficulties—weighs the anger of Innocent, and dismisses it. He is all for the Constantinople venture, which will yield new ports and gold to his city. After all, his treaty with the Crusaders only obligates him to transport them over the sea. What if his ships take them into the Dardanelles, instead of Jerusalem? Already the Crusaders are pledged to pay their way by assaulting Zara. The blind eyes of the Doge probe into the darkness.

The wound in his head, that aches at times when he is tired and deprives him of all but a gleam of his sight, was dealt him in Constantinople. He would like revenge.

If only a way can be found! And so Dandolo comes to take the cross.

"Then the galleys," Ville-Hardouin relates, "and the transports were divided among the barons. Ah, God, what good war horses were put in them. And when the ships were loaded with arms and supplies, and knights and sergeants, the shields were ranged along the rails and the sterns, and banners hung out, many of them very fine. And know that the ships carried perriers and mangonels as many as three hundred and more, and all the engines that are used to capture a city. Never did a fairer fleet sail from any port. They sailed from the port of Venice as you have heard."

It was indeed a scene to satisfy the eyes of the veteran Ville-Hardouin. The drifting vessels, bright with shields and banners, covered the lagoons. On the stone embankment throngs of Venetians

*The barons were interested in Alexis' story, but only replied that they would give Alexis aid *after* their Jerusalem campaign, if he would join them in that campaign. It must be remembered that the barons were not under the orders of Boniface. Several of them were equal in rank to the marquis; they had elected him merely head of the council and treasurer-in-general. This first offer of the conspirators was not made known to the common soldiers.

waved and cried farewell. The heavy anchors were tugged up, at the blast of a trumpet, and the square sails hoisted.

Wind filled the sails, and spread the great red crosses out. Again the trumpets sounded, and men began singing. Some of them were weeping.

The red galley of the Doge turned slowly, its prow pointing out to sea. On the gilded stern castle, under the flapping banners, the Doge sat beneath his pavilion of red satin, his aged face intent.

He was leading out a great power of men and ships, and from that moment rested upon him the responsibility of the fleet and the fortunes of Venice. He was sailing to the East, yet his blind eyes were turned not to Jerusalem but toward the Dalmatian coast and the city of Constantinople.

HENRY DANDOLO, Doge of Venice, was an old man, and he had reaped the harvest of his years. He had the pride of a princely family, and the wariness of a merchant trader. He was past master of the finesse of intrigue, and he was perfectly willing to break his word in a good cause.

For the French Crusaders on his ship, no doubt he had tolerant contempt—they knew almost nothing of this part of the world and took no pains to hide their ignorance. Moreover, he held them in his debt. And he meant to use them in every possible way before granting them quittance of his debt.

The zeal of the Crusaders stirred no enthusiasm in this aged man ripe with worldly wisdom. Dandolo served only Venice. He was prepared to gamble hugely to gain his end. And the Doge was, as Ville-Hardouin observed, an unusually brave man.

Even Dandolo, however, would not have ventured to sail with his fleet direct to Constantinople instead of to Jerusalem. Ignorant as the Crusaders were, they would know east from south; besides, he must bring them to Constantinople in a friendly mood, or nothing could be done. Innocent, also, must be induced to give his approval to the venture—no easy matter.

So the council of Venice had hit upon the expedient of Zara. If the Crusaders could be led to capture Zara, they would be smirched. They had vowed not to lift weapon against Christians. Meanwhile, time would be lost at Zara, and the autumn storms would make the Jerusalem voyage difficult.

In one way or another, Dandolo managed to take a month to sail down the Dalmatian coast to the break in the line of hills where stood the walled port of Zara. There, matters went well enough. True, a *religeux*, the stern abbot of Vaux, presented himself before the barons and exhorted them:

"Seigneurs, I forbid you, on behalf of the Pope of Rome, to attack this city, for it is a Christian city, and you are pilgrims."

Dandolo put a stop to that at once.

"My lords," he reminded the leaders, "you have promised that you will aid me to take this city, and now I ask that you redeem your promise."

It was soon done. The fleet forced a way into the harbor, breaking the chain across the channel; the Crusaders set up their engines, began their bombardment and mined the wall. In five days the people of Zara made terms—went out with their lives, leaving the city abandoned to the invaders. Dandolo asked that the Crusaders occupy one half and the Venetians the other.

"My lords," he explained, "winter is come, and the season of storms. We shall not be able to move out of here until Easter, because we can not obtain supplies along the way. This city and country, however, is well able to supply what we need."

To this the Crusaders agreed without discussion, and as Dandolo expected, they sent envoys to the Pope to explain why they had turned aside to Zara. In time the response came. Innocent, when he heard the tale of the messengers, had been angered. But he took no action

against them, merely warning them to keep together and to hold to the Crusade.

The next incident was the arrival of Boniface of Montserrat who had lingered behind,* to watch events in Rome, and to keep in touch with Philip of Swabia. He was soon followed by couriers from Germany, bearing a new offer from Philip.

If they aided Alexis to recover his empire, the Byzantine prince had agreed to place Constantinople under obedience to Rome. Since they had spent all their money, he agreed to give them 200,000 marks of silver. And he would go with them in person to the Holy Land, or send instead 10,000 men at his expense, for a year. More than that, he agreed to keep 500 armed men in service at the Holy Land as long as he lived.

Philip's envoys explained that they had full powers to conclude the treaty on behalf of Alexis. They added that so fine an offer had never been made to any men before, and that the Crusaders would be lacking in spirit to refuse it.

This appeal was most cleverly worded. It challenged their pride, and promised aid for the Jerusalem venture at the same time; it offered an enormous amount of money—and most of the Crusaders had had time to appreciate the humiliation of an empty purse.

In their minds Constantinople was the queen city of the earth, fabulously rich, filled with precious relics of the saints and other wonderful things. What a feat of arms to conquer this abode of emperors! And how well they were equipped for just such an enterprise. Boniface of Montserrat favored it, the Doge approved it. Philip urged it, and all the Venetians were eager to set out.

Gravely the leaders of the army talked it over, in council. They talked it over, Ville-Hardouin remarks, in more than one sense, because they could not agree. The dour abbot of Vaux spoke for his party, pointing out that many of them would not agree to go anywhere but toward Syria.

"*Beaux Seigneurs*," others answered, "in Syria you can do nothing. The others who have left us and gone on by other ports have been able to do nothing. Only through Egypt or the land of the Greeks can the Holy Land be recovered, if it is ever recovered. If we refuse this agreement we shall be shamed."

At the end of the debate, the great lords cast their decision for Constantinople saying that they would be disgraced if they did not go. Boniface of Montserrat, Baldwin of Flanders, Count Louis and Count Hugh went to the residence of the Doge and pledged themselves to go, by oaths and sealed treaty. Only a dozen signed the treaty.

A large party of the Crusaders could not be weaned away from Syria. Daily, men went off, angered, in the vessels of the merchants. Five hundred managed to get a ship for themselves, and were caught in a storm off the coast, every man being drowned.

Hard headed Simon of Montfort went off, with the abbot of Vaux, after securing a safe conduct from the king of the Hungarians. A whole division of the army planned to withdraw, and was only restrained by a pledge that within two weeks after the capture of Constantinople they would be given ships to go to Syria.

Meanwhile the exiled prince, Alexis, appeared with a small following, to be greeted ceremoniously by the Doge, and paraded among the curious Crusaders. Dandolo had no wish to delay. Swiftly the walls of Zara were dismantled and the ships loaded again, and headed down the coast.

The Venetians had won the contest in the council chamber, but the open sea and the walls of Constantinople lay in their path.

*While Boniface was in Rome, the emperor in Constantinople sent envoys to the Papal court to protest urgently against the invasion of Constantinople by the Crusaders—rumors of the undertaking having reached his ears.

Innocent hesitated, and discussed the matter with the council of cardinals. Then, privately, he warned Boniface not to let the Crusade go toward Constantinople, but publicly he responded to the Byzantine envoys that only by submission to the church of Rome could they gain his intercession in their favor. He tried to profit from the usurper-emperor's fears to bring about the forced submission of the Byzantines to Rome.

Actually, either willingly or unwillingly, he paved the way for the conspirators. Boniface, delighted, hastened to join the army. From that time he and Dandolo, knowing that Innocent had threatened Constantinople with the Crusaders, played their hands freely.

IT WAS a strange fellowship that set forth in the spring of the year 1203 toward the east. A band of men held together in a common enterprise—no heroes, certainly, but very human beings. Boniface, the Jason of this voyage, might indeed have been dazzled by the fleece of gold; yet his hard and practical mind beheld only political advantage to be gained. The blind Dandolo, intriguing for his city, dreaming perhaps of personal vengeance, caught at every bit of land that might build an empire in the seas. The weak Byzantine prince, having promised what he never could pay, hoped to wrest a crown for himself out of the delusion of others. And the barons, drifting from one entangling pledge to another understanding little, dreamed of a great victory and glory to be gained.

They were entering the East, of which the minstrels had sung—whence the Magi had come with their gifts, and where Roland once had sought Cathay. And they beheld new marvels with eager interest.

The galleys, the long oars swinging, drifted into the great harbor of Corfu, overhung by gardens and forested hills. For three weeks men and horses rested in fields where white lilies grew and orange trees blossomed. Then all the ships went forth again.

"And the day," Ville-Hardouin explains, "was fine and clear, the wind fair and mild; they raised the sails to the wind."

Along the rocky shore of Greece they coasted, over the water that became clear and blue and tranquil as the days passed. On the hills they saw the tiny domes of churches and the terraces of vineyards. At the island called Andros some of them landed with horses and arms, to climb the hot hills and bring in the astonished Greeks to submit to the young Alexis. Dandolo had seen to this.

Passing from one island to another, they crossed the drowsy Ægean, putting in at evening to moonlit shores, where they landed to search for water while the galleys lay like sleeping ships upon the tideless inlets. And in these days died Guy, the castellan of Coucy, who had made in Venice the song to his wife. His body, covered with his shield, was slipped into the sea. The minstrels, however, did not forget his song.

> "Beau sire Dieu, now must I complain
> That she no more may comfort me
> Where I must go . . ."

In mid-June when the evenings were long and tranquil, they passed the brown peak of Lemnos and sailed in toward the mainland. A narrow gut of water opened up before them. On the left hand, a long gray spit of land appeared, and on the right dark hills above a low shore. Sea gulls clamored over the masts, swooping down to drift upon the troubled water behind the ships.

Some of the Crusaders knew that this strait was the Hellespont, or Dardanelles, and that Troy had stood on the breast of the right hand shore. Most of them called it the Arm of St. George, because the priests who were wisest in such matters, assured them that the tomb of the warrior saint was near the water. At all events, it seemed to be a good omen.

They put in at a small town clustered beneath a gray clay bluff, and the people of the town came out to submit to them. They christened the place Avie and waited there eight days for lagging ships to come up.

Then they emerged from the strait with a strong wind, the scattered vessels filling the stretch of water as far as a man could see. They crossed the open stretch of the Marmora under a cloudy sky, while fishing craft fled before them like gulls. In the haze toward the east they made out a low shore, and upon a point of the shore the gleam of white marble.

"And then," Ville-Hardouin relates, "the ships and the galleys came into full sight of Constantinople. Yet you should know that they looked long upon Constantinople, as those who had never seen it. For they never thought that there could be in the world so rich a city, when

they beheld these high walls and strong towers by which it was encircled, and these rich palaces and lofty churches, of which there were so many that no one who had not beheld them could believe it —and the length and the size of this city that was sovereign of all others in the world.

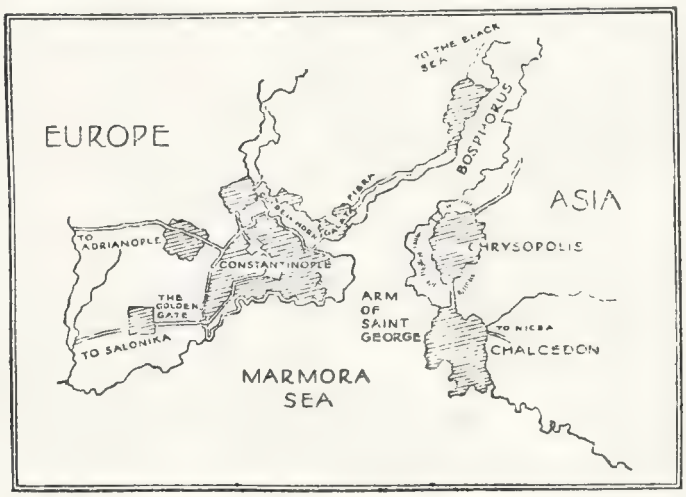
"And know too that no man was so hardy that his flesh did not crawl at the sight; and this was no marvel, for never was so great an affair undertaken by men since the beginning of the world."

It was, indeed, a great undertaking. As they rowed up and down before the city, the Crusaders felt awed by it. And they remembered that the Arabs, Huns and Bulgars had gone against it in vain. No foeman had penetrated its walls in eight hundred years.

To their eyes, it loomed huge and forbidding, and they gazed at it in a kind of fascination.

The city of Constantinople had been built where the Marmora sea narrowed to the Bosphorus strait. It was like a triangle, blunt at the point where the great dome of the Sancta Sophia rose above the gardens of the palaces. On the right hand side of the triangle the city wall faced the sea, so that the water washed against the dark stones. On the left hand side the wall curved around the crook of the Golden Horn, which was the long, narrow harbor of the city.

Along the base of the triangle, the wall faced the land. Here a deep moat made approach difficult, and the great towers of the inner wall covered the smaller, outer barrier. These towers, square and solid, rose more than forty feet from the ground; and they had arrow ports opening on every side. The Crusaders had heard tales of the machines upon the wall—machines that cast forth the deadly Greek fire.



They saw that the narrow mouth of the Golden Horn was barred by a great chain, hanging between two towers. Behind this chain clustered the Byzantine galleys and merchant ships. On the opposite side of the Golden Horn stood the suburb of Galata on a steep height, with a round gray tower brooding over it.

Dandolo and his Venetians knew the lie of the land very well, and the Doge did a wise thing. He advised the barons to land for awhile on the side of the Bosphorus opposite Constantinople, to rest and to forage for supplies in the open country. Naturally, the emperor had gathered all his soldiery in the city, and they would not be molested on this side of the strait.

His advice proved to be excellent, for the Crusaders took possession of the suburbs of Chalcedony and Skutari, quartering themselves in the deserted palaces of the Byzantines—marveling much at the splendor of them—and occupying themselves with gathering in the nearly-ripe harvest from the fields, while they lingered on the heights and stared at the domes and gigantic statuary of the city a league away.

To them the usurper-emperor sent an envoy, offering them a treasure of gold if they would depart and leave his land.

Conon de Bethune rose and answered the envoy:

"*Beau sire*, you have said to us that your lord is amazed because we, lords and barons, have entered his lands. Into his lands we have not entered, for he gained them wrongly and sinfully and against God and right. They belong to his nephew who is here with us—the son of the emperor Isaac.

"But if your lord wishes to submit to the mercy of his nephew, and surrender to him the crown and the empire, we will pray him to pardon him.

"And if you do not return to us with this submission, do not return again."

The envoy did not appear again, and the barons made ready for their adventure. In Baldwin and his youthful brother Henry they had experienced soldiers well able to weigh the hazards they faced. The first thing they did was to divide their small army into "battles" or corps, with Baldwin and Henry in command of the advance corps. The Burgundians, Lombards and Germans formed the rear corps, under Boniface.

Dandolo aided them but could no longer dictate to them, for this was a matter of fighting, and the barons knew what they were about. The Venetians wanted the attack to be made upon the sea wall, pointing out that the Crusaders were not numerous enough to hold the open country against the Greeks—which would be necessary if they attacked from the land side.

The barons answered that that was all very well, but they had no skill at fighting upon the decks of ships; they were accustomed to their horses and the feel of firm earth beneath them, and they would fight in their own fashion, upon land. So it was agreed that the Venetians would attack the sea wall while the Crusaders stormed the land wall.

After sunrise of the day chosen for the crossing, the leaders mounted and went to their commands, while the bishops and clergy passed among the soldiers hearing their confessions and taking their last testaments. The men did this readily, in good spirits.

It was a fair morning, with little wind. The groups of knights and esquires led their horses down to the waiting barks. Every one was in mail, the helmets laced; the horses were saddled and draped in heavy leather and iron mesh. Men-at-arms filed into the transports, their shields slung on their backs.

Then the oared galleys were brought up and made fast to the heavier transports in order to cross the strait more quickly. The young Alexis appeared with his grandees, greeted the barons and entered his ship. A trumpet sounded and others answered down the shore. The fleet moved out into the strait.

It did not make for Constantinople; instead it bore down on the Galata shore, where a division of the Byzantine army was encamped. The galleys made straight for the stone quays and the gravel beach. With Greek arrows hissing around them, knights leaped from the first transports, waist deep into the water.

No one hung back. The sergeants followed with the archers. Arrows sped back at the Greeks, and the Crusaders pressed forward with leveled spears. The Greek soldiery gave way, retreated down to the Golden Horn. The Crusaders took possession of the abandoned camp, while others went to look at the Galata tower.

They did not hurry. All the army was brought across and quartered along the Galata shore, in the abandoned warehouses of the Jews. The next morning the garrison in Galata castle made a sally but did not manage to take the Crusaders unaware. Knights and-men-at-arms fought hand to hand with the Greek mercenaries, driving them back toward the harbor, and following them so close that some of the knights entered the tower itself. The hill and fortress of Galata was now in their hands.

Meanwhile the Venetians forced the harbor. Some of the war galleys were driven at the chain, and one of them equipped with a steel beak upon its prow, succeeded in breaking the taut chain. The galleys rowed in, spreading havoc among the Byzantine vessels along

the Golden Horn, until they held the whole stretch of water.

For four days the knights consolidated their new position, repairing bridges that the Greeks had broken down, and gathering in fresh supplies. On the fifth day they moved again, around the long crook of the Golden Horn, to the land wall of Constantinople. They kept close to the water, to have the support of the ships on their left flank.

BALDWIN and his barons climbed to the top of a hill crowned by an old abbey and surveyed the wall in front of them at the corner where the land wall meets the wall of the harbor. Here behind round towers rose the terraces and flat roofs of one of the great palaces, the Blachernae in which the emperor himself had his residence.

While the siege engines were brought up by the industrious sailors, the Crusaders built a palisade and ditch around their new camp, and beat off sallies by the Byzantines who came and went elsewhere at will out of the various gates of the land wall.

The Crusaders' camp only faced a single corner of the mighty triangle of the city, and they were too wise to scatter their men. Within the city there were perhaps a dozen men of all sorts to one soldier outside. But the ranks of the Byzantines were filled by mercenaries, Norsemen of the famous Varangian guard, Slavs and Saxons and Turks—stalwart warriors who fought for hire and kept faith with their masters so long as they were well led. Greek noblemen and horsemen from the provinces made up the cavalry, and the armed rabble of the city helped man the wall. But the real strength of the emperor lay in the mercenaries who alone were capable of standing against the mailed swordsmen of the West.

Meanwhile the skilful Venetians had put their ships in order for the attack on the sea wall. They set up engines on the lofty fore and after decks of the galleys, and they erected flying bridges at the crossyards upon the masts, attaching ropes to the bridges so that they could be lowered at any given moment by the crew below. By bringing their galleys alongside the towers, Dandolo's men hoped to be able to lower the flying bridges against the summits of the towers, and cross to the wall, covered by the missiles from the engines and crossbows, of which they had a great number.

All this occupied ten days and not until July 17 were the trumpets sounded for the assault. What followed is related by Ville-Hardouin:

"Four battle corps went to the assault, with the count Baldwin of Flanders. Against the outer wall near the sea—and this wall was well manned by English and Danes—they placed two ladders. The attack was strong and good and hard. By sheer force some knights and two sergeants climbed up the ladders and gained the wall.

"Fifteen men in all got upon the wall and fought body to body, with sword and ax. Then the garrison made a new effort, and cast them back savagely, so that two were made captive.

"Thus the attack was checked on the side of the French, with many men wounded, and the barons very angry.

"While this was happening, the Doge of Venice had not neglected the battle. Nay, he had arranged his galleys and ships into a line, and this line was three crossbow shots in length. The ships drew in to the shore* that lay under the wall and the towers. Then you would have seen missiles fly from the mangonels of the ships, and the bolts of the crossbows shoot up, and volleys of arrows.

"Those within the wall defended themselves strongly, while the ladders of the ships drew so near that in several places they were hacked by swords and lances. The tumult waxed so great that it seemed to engulf all the land and the sea. And the galleys did not dare to lay themselves against the shore.

*This was on the harbor side of the city where the wall stood back a little from the water, to give room for landing places and steps.

"Now you will hear of a rare deed of bravery. For the Doge of Venice who was an old man and almost blind, was all armed upon the fore deck of his galley, and he had the gonfanon of St. Mark held before him. He cried to his men to bring the galley against the shore, or he would wreak punishment upon their bodies.

"So they do this—for the galley touches the shore, and they leap out. They carry the gonfanon of St. Mark ashore before the Doge. And when the Venetians see the gonfanon of St. Mark ashore, and the galley of their lord against the land, then each one deems himself ashamed and all make toward the shore. Those in the open boats leap upon the embankment, and those from the great ships climb down into barges and gain the shore—most swift and eager in their rivalry.

"Then you would have seen a marvelous and great assault. For the banner of St. Mark was seen rising over one of the towers, though no one knows who carried it thither.

"It was a rare miracle. Those within flee and abandon the wall, and those outside enter in, swift and eager in their rivalry. They take twenty-five towers* and garrison them with their men. And the Doge gets into an open boat, and he sends a message to the barons, to let them know that twenty-five towers have been taken. The barons are so joyous that they can hardly believe that this is true.

"When the emperor Alexis† saw that they had entered the city in this fashion, he began to send his men against them in great numbers, so that it seemed as if they could not hold out. Then they cast fire down between themselves and the Greeks, because the wind was behind our men. The fire caught in the houses and spread so that the Greeks could no longer see our men, and had to retire.

"Then the emperor Alexis of Constantinople went out with all the forces of the city, by other gates which were all of a league distant from our camp. He drew up his men in battle array in the plain, and they rode toward our camp, and when our French saw them, they ran to arms everywhere. But the count Baldwin of Flanders was guarding our engines under the wall of the Blachernae.

"Six of our corps of battle ranged themselves outside the palisade of the camp, while the sergeants and esquires formed on foot behind them, and the archers and crossbowmen behind them. And they waited thus before the palisade, which was wise—because if they had sallied into the plain they would have been overwhelmed by the numbers of the enemy who had forty battle corps to our six.

"The emperor Alexis rode near enough for the archers on both sides to begin to shoot. When the Doge of Venice heard of this, he made his men leave the towers they had taken; he hastened toward the camp, and was himself the first to set foot to shore, to lead his men to us.

"Then the Greeks dared not cast themselves against our line, while our men would not leave the palisade.

"When the emperor Alexis understood this, he began to withdraw his troops; and when the army of pilgrims saw that, they rode forward at a foot pace. The Greeks retreated within the wall.

"So the battle rested on this day, for it pleased God that nothing more should happen. The emperor Alexis went off to his palace, and the men of the army returned to their tents and disarmed, for they were weary enough. They ate and drank only a little, for they had little to eat or to drink."

THE SIEGE was not resumed the next day. For that same night Alexis the usurper-emperor took his daughter, and a thousand pounds of gold and slipped from the palace. Unknown to the city, he entered a boat with a few followers and sailed into the Marmora, leaving his wife the rest of his family and his people to face the situation.

*The towers of the Byzantine city were built within bowshot of one another. The Venetians held nearly a mile of the wall.

†The usurper-emperor within Constantinople bore the same name as the son of the dethroned emperor who was with the Crusaders.

Whereupon the Greek nobles naturally released the blind Isaac from prison and carried him in state to the Blachernae—so that there would be at least the figure of an emperor on the throne, and the cause of the war could be removed.

Messengers were sent out to the young Alexis bidding him enter the city to take his place in peace beside his blind father.

The Crusaders were rather amazed at this sudden change of front, but they did not trust the Greeks overmuch, and sent envoys in to remind Isaac of their treaty —that Constantinople was to be placed under the church of Rome, that two hundred thousand marks of silver were to be paid them, and ten thousand Byzantines sent with them to the Holy Land.

The old Isaac had not been told of this, and it troubled him. He replied that it was a great deal to do, but he would agree to carry out the conditions.

The army of the Crusaders rejoiced. Now at last the way was clear to Jerusalem. The matter of Constantinople had been settled, the season was good for the voyage, and in a month they might be off the coast of Acre. Some of them escorted Alexis in to his father, and they made no objection when they were requested to move back to the Galata camp to avoid rioting between their men and the Byzantines.

A date was set for the coronation of the young Alexis, and the first 100,000 marks of silver—half the sum agreed on—were paid them by Alexis. Of this, half went to the Venetians by the agreement that the Italians were to divide evenly with the Westerners all that was gained on the Crusade, and the French lords paid up in addition the 34,000 marks that they owed the seamen of the lagoons for their passage.*

This done, they expected to sail. But Alexis appeared in their camp, to ask for more time, explaining that the empire was in chaos, with the usurper in Adrianople, and he had no means of raising the rest of the money. If they left, he insisted, he would have a civil war on his hands.

Behind the pleading of the weak Byzantine was the strong will of Dandolo. The Doge had no desire to take his fleet to Jerusalem. He wanted to penetrate Byzantium, and at this moment of mutual suspicion he was in his element. He caused the Crusaders to remember that the term of their original treaty with him expired at the end of September.

It was now the end of July, and two months would not serve to gain anything in the Holy Land. But if they would agree to remain at Constantinople until spring, they could seat Alexis firmly on his throne, collect the money due them, and sail for Syria with all the summer before them. He would agree to put the fleet at their disposal for another year.

The barons were fairly bewildered by this artful shifting of the issue. It was perfectly true that they had only hired the Venetians until Saint Michael's day, about two months distant. They had also sworn to aid Alexis to regain his throne, and now it seemed that they would have to reconquer all his empire for him. A deep anger stirred in them, but it did not find a voice. Boniface the marquis understood very well the intrigue that was sapping their will, but he kept his own counsel, having his own game to play.

The barons withdrew to talk matters over. It seemed to them that they were chasing a pot of gold beneath an elusive rainbow—yet the gleam of gold dazzled some of them who had seen the splendor of Constantinople. Others demanded ships to sail at once to Jerusalem.

"In the end," Ville-Hardouin explains, "the affair was settled in this manner: the Venetians made oath to keep the fleet here for a year counting from Saint Michael's day; the emperor Alexis swore to give them all that he could; the pil-

*It needs a moment's reflection to appreciate the really brilliant profiteering of the Venetians. They had now been paid the full amount of the 85,000 marks to transport the Crusaders to Syria, and besides had 50,000 tribute from the Byzantines. They had Zara and several islands to boot. Yet the Crusaders were not halfway to Syria, and the Venetians had no intention of taking them.

Nor could Dandolo be taken to task by the letter of his agreements. He had obligated himself in the first place only to transport the Crusaders "over the sea", which he had done. He had agreed to accept Zara as a "respite" for the balance due him, and he had granted the respite.

grims swore to support him and remain here for a year."

Dandolo now could afford to wait for the inevitable to happen, and happen it did. While the barons were off on an expedition to bring the northern country into submission to the new emperor, rioting broke out between the Crusaders and Byzantines in Constantinople. During the rioting some men set fire to the ramshackle wooden house along the harbor. It is not certain who they were, but they may well have been the Venetians. The conflagration, fanned by a high wind, spread to the heights and destroyed some of the fine palaces and churches, even damaging the Sancta Sophia.

The barons, returning, were sincerely grieved by the havoc, but the Byzantines were angered beyond remedy. Some of them tried to destroy the Venetian fleet with fireships in retaliation, and the sailors barely managed to save their vessels.

By now the nobles of Constantinople were ready to be rid of the young Alexis and his blind father. They chose a certain Murtzuple for leader, and brought about one of the palace revolutions that Constantinople had witnessed so often.

Alexis and his father were seized in their sleep, hurried out of the Blachernae and into cells underground, where the blind man soon died from poison. Alexis, surviving the poison, was strangled by assassins and ended his miserable life on the first day of the new year 1204.

The gates of Constantinople were closed against the Crusaders, who, with two years of frustration gnawing at them, were now enraged in their turn. Without hesitation they prepared to storm the city.

But Dandolo, with his opportunity at hand, was careful to call them into conference and to have them agree that if they took the city, a new emperor should be chosen by six Venetians and six Crusaders, and a quarter of the city allotted to him. The other three-quarters were to be divided equally between Venetians and Crusaders, and the outlying country also.

The blind man was looking into the future with a vision more clear than that of the barons, who had all their eyes to see and yet saw not.

SPRING had come to the Bosphorus, and the Judas trees were in bloom again. The poplars of the palace gardens thrust their green tracery against the white marble walls, and sheep grazed in the meadows by the reservoirs.

It was Palm Sunday, but no procession of children carried branches through the streets of the city. In the churches the priests prayed in their robes of cloth-of-gold, lifting weak hands toward the altars. Behind the priests veiled women wept, and slaves stood ill at ease listening to the echoes of a distant tumult. A north wind was blowing through the streets of Constantinople, ruffling the dark water outside the wall.

And from the wall itself, borne by the wind, came the roar of human conflict that had begun the day before and had not ceased. Above the pulse of the swell that beat against the embankment could be heard the splintering of the oars of galleys, the crashing of the engines hurling rocks and blocks of marble that soared briefly into the air and dropped upon the decks of the barbarians without. The cries and shouting of men rose and fell with the wind.

The barbarians, clad in iron, were attacking the wall, climbing over the bodies of their dead, mad with the lust of fighting. They had been cast back and broken, but they were pressing on again.

So the veiled women prayed, stifling the fear that clutched at them—ladies of the court, wrapped in dark cloaks, princesses born in the purple chamber, Greek slaves, pallid beneath enameled head bands—they vowed candles to the shrines and offered jewels to the saints, if only the wall would hold against that human tide.

They had been told that the engineers had built wooden hoardings upon the

parapet, to ward off the flying bridges of the galleys, and that engines had been placed upon the towers to keep the ships away. They had seen smoke rising from the wall, and drifting over the city, like some huge ill omened bird with wide dark wings.

By the gates of the churches black slaves clustered around the empty litters of the women. With a pounding of hoofs, Greek youths galloped past, brave in gilded breastplates and plumed helmets. Through the swirling dust came companies of swordsmen, long haired Norsemen marching with a steady tread beside swarthy Armenians. Against the sky, their blue *shubas* whipping in the wind, Jews stood on the housetops, watching the wall with anxious faces.

Only the wide forums were deserted except by bands of restless dogs, and men who ran at times past the lines of impassive statues. Long dead emperors turned stony faces to the tumult, poising scepters in uplifted arms. No one heeded them. They belonged to the day when Constantinople had been mistress of all the seas—a city guarded by the angels, indifferent to wars.

In the taverns by the harbor, slightly wounded soldiers flung themselves down on benches and shook their heads over goblets of red Cyprian wine. They were silent, or they talked hurriedly in varied tongues. Some said that the leader of the Ducas family, the one called Murtzuple, who wore the purple buskins of an emperor, had sallied out to meet the Franks* in the field, taking with him the stone figure of the Virgin. And now the figure was bound upon one of the masts of the Crusaders' galleys, for all to see. An evil omen, that.

And some had seen a galley driven by the wind against a tower. From the bridge of the galley a Venetian sailor and an armed knight crawled through one of the embrasures. The Venetian was killed, but the knight still held out in the tower.

*Franks—so the Byzantines called the Crusaders, who were French for the most part.

But the Franks had been beaten once, and they would be again, for twenty thousand men could never break through the wall. Soon it would be dark, the fighting at an end.

So they talked, gulping their wine, while the smoke grew thicker overhead. Voices clamored in the street, and a cry went up.

"Four towers are taken by the Franks."

The roar of conflict upon the wall spread down into the nearest alleys. A band of Varangians, their scarlet cloaks dim in the twilight, marching toward the wall, was met by a rabble of Greeks running without arms. The guardsmen drew their swords and slashed a path through the fugitives, stepping over the bodies. With a steady stride they went on, until smoke swirled down and hid them and they came to a line of burning houses whence women fled carrying bundles in their arms.

The women clutched at the giant Norsemen, who had kept order in the city since forgotten times. But the flames were an enemy that no sword could deal with, and the officer in command of the guards gave an order. The Varangians forced their way out of the multitude toward the nearest palace.

ACROSS the city by the reservoirs a horseman emerged from the cover of a garden. He wore gray iron mesh from his foot to his chin, and the reins of his horse were iron chains. A round steel cap was close drawn upon his eyes. In his right hand the Crusader held a bare sword. Curiously, he glanced about him, and urged his charger down into the wide avenue that led toward the heart of the city. Other horsemen followed the knight. They had come through the splinters of a postern gate, and the only enemies they met were the deserted tents of a Byzantine regiment and the grazing sheep.

Over the drifting smoke the red glow of sunset deepened in the sky. Against the striped walls of the Blachernae dark bodies of French archers assembled.

Robed priests fled from the little domes of the Pantokrator, and in the shadows some women wailed. A Crusader dismounted from his horse and went into the church. Before his torn and dusty surcoat he held his shield advanced.

But the basilica was empty—lighted only by tapers that fluttered at the wind's touch, beneath a holy picture. The Crusader looked at the altar on which silver boxes rested, and at the stiff forms of mosaic saints. Turning on his heel, he went out. When darkness had quite settled down a group of spearmen with a lighted torch stamped into the church and snatched up the silver boxes.

Baldwin rode among his men, ordering them back into ranks. Esquires carrying spluttering torches trotted behind him, so that all could see the wedge shaped helmet and the shield bearing a rearing lion that marked the Count of Flanders from the other lords. When he met groups of knights he bade them dismount and go back to their men. He said that three battle corps of the Crusaders were within the wall, but if they pressed on into the main city, they would be lost in the labyrinth of streets.

He ordered his standard planted in an open square, and men at arms hastened up with benches and planks to feed the great fires that lighted the square. Around the fires crouched captives, Gypsies and Jewish hags, and wandering children—for in these open fields the Gypsies and riff-raff had camped. Black goats galloped aimlessly among the horses. The knights began to count the palfreys and the mules their men had gathered in.

Beyond the light of the fires the darkness was filled with a rustling and a pattering of feet. Shadowy forms slipped over the roofs. Beyond this fringe of sound and movement lay Constantinople, hidden and vast, with the domes of great churches and the shafts of lofty columns standing upon the heights, against the stars. Here and there a cresset blazed, fanned by the north wind, or a torch flickered and vanished.

The Crusaders looked into the darkness drowsily, wondering what new magic the artful Byzantines were concocting against them, and what was happening to the treasure troves that were secreted in this citadel of strange peoples and unknown tongues. They heard Venetian trumpets sound at intervals on the harbor wall, to their left. And messengers came in from the marquis, Boniface, whose troops were quartered a little ahead of them, between them and the Venetians—so that the invaders held this northern corner of the city. All but the great Blachernae palace at the point of the corner, where Varangians and slaves still guarded the gates. It seemed to Ville-Hardouin that it would take months to capture the citadels of this place.

Either the suspense proved too much for Boniface's Lombards, or they began to loot the houses around them. For they set fire to the wooden tenements. The flames leaped the narrow alleys and licked their way under the roofs, soaring beneath the blast of the wind, eating a path to the south, with no one to check them. Soon the glow of the conflagration could be seen from all the walls.

In the courtyard of the Bucoleon the Greek cavalry was summoned by Murtzuple, and orders issued to form for an attack upon the Crusaders. Attended by his officers, the leader of the Byzantines ascended the street that wound past the deserted Hippodrome, and led through the small forum where the giant statue of Constantine towered. Here they waited awhile, talking together in low voices, until Murtzuple gave a word of command and the cavalry advanced at the trot along the wide avenue that ran due east. Soon the Crusaders were far distant, on their right, but the officers increased their pace, galloping into the enclosure of the Golden Gate, where the bronze portals swung back at Murtzuple's command.

While the Varangians on duty at the gate watched grimly, the cavalry with Murtzuple in its midst swept by them and out into the country, abandoning the city to its fate.

When the nobles at the Bucoleon heard

that Murtzuple had fled, they gathered behind closed doors and elected one Theodore Lascaris emperor. But the fire was approaching the center of the city, and the Byzantine grandees had no heart for further fighting. They hastened to their households and, collecting their families, fled to the southern harbors on the side away from the Venetian galleys. There they entered ships and put out into the Marmora, the north wind driving them toward the Asiatic shore.

At dawn, when a pall of smoke hung over the city, the Crusaders advanced again but found no one to bar their way. A procession of bearded priests came out, bearing a cross, to beg for mercy for the city.

AS IF by a miracle, Constantinople lay in the Crusaders' power. At first the leaders were wary. Keeping the men in ranks, they occupied the forums and sent mounted patrols through the streets. Seizing the gates, they let in the Venetian bands and the Crusaders who had been guarding the camp. It was soon clear that the armed forces of the Byzantines had dispersed, except in the palaces. And while the leading barons turned their attention to the palaces, the soldiers and knights began to loot.

The fire was spreading over a portion of the city as large as Rome, Venice and Paris all put together, and the frightened Byzantines were trying to drag their possessions from its path. Sword in hand, the Crusaders ran into the courtyards of the nobles' palaces, while frightened slaves fled before them.

They snatched up silk carpets from the floor and tore down candelabra. Then they came to the sleeping chambers, where unimagined luxury met their eyes. Red faced Norman peasants and stalwart Burgundians stared open mouthed at walls covered with damask, at toilet tables of onyx and ebony inlaid with ivory. While the Byzantine ladies hid their faces, and eunuchs cowered in the corners, the soldiers tore open cabinets—emptying their bundles of poorer loot, to load themselves anew with amber bracelets and jeweled combs. Laughing, they poured the finest perfumes from crystal and enamel jars. Pricking the robed eunuchs with their daggers, they bade the stout creatures lead them on to greater treasures.

In the long corridors they met other men at arms carrying gold plated statues on their shoulders. They investigated organs hidden in the ceilings, and shouted into whispering galleries that had served the lords of Byzantium who wished to overhear the talk of guests or servants. And they poured themselves goblets of heady Greek wines.

Some of them went back when the looting was done, to seek out the handsomest of the women slaves. They had never seen girls so fair and sweet smelling as these creatures from the East—dark haired Persians, with fire in their blood, and yellow maned Circassians with tall strong bodies. Fearfully, the women submitted to these uncouth men.

Elsewhere, Venetian merchant warriors with more discerning taste hurried with their servitors into the galleries of the Hippodrome where priceless statues of pagan gods stood—the handwork of Greek masters. Prying gold plates from the wall, and guarding their trove with spear and ax, they climbed to the courts of the Sacred Palace, to snatch down tapestries woven with gold thread and to pick up here an ivory image, there a tissue of silk heavy with pearls.

Meanwhile a stranger ravaging was going on. Warrior priests of the army—zealous bishops with their retinues—sought out the oldest of the churches and forced their way into treasuries where, in gilt reliquaries, were kept the most famous relics of the world. Long had Christendom heard of the virtues of the heads of the Apostles, entombed beneath the basilica by the Bucoleon; throughout the city were gathered the most precious tokens of the East—the bones and the wood and the hair that had been conveyed from the *sancta sanctorum* of the elder

East. And the eager prelates and chaplains struggled to get into their hands these treasures beyond price, to carry home in triumph to their own churches.

The stout bishop of Halberstadt, taking advantage of the absence of the marquis who was at the Bucoleon, made his way into the imperial chapel and marched off with all the relics.

"We saw," relates Nicetas, a Byzantine court secretary who witnessed the downfall of the city, "what shocks the ears to hear. Those wicked and unfortunate men used on their tables the holy vases and ornaments of the churches. It is not possible to hear with patience what they did at the great church—they seized the altar table, a marvel of rare beauty, and divided it into several pieces among the soldiers. Into the most secret parts of the churches they led pack mules and saddled horses, so that dung and blood profaned the splendid floors.

"Then a woman, weighed down with sin, an ambassadress of all the furies, servant of evil spirits and priestess of black magic, sat herself down in the patriarch's seat. Mocking Christ, she sang in a broken voice, whirling around and leaping up and down!"

They tried to force an entrance to the mighty Sancta Sophia, where they had heard the very chains of St. Peter were kept in a golden casket, and the gifts of the Magi in alabaster vases—and the ancient crown of Constantine set with jewels bestowed upon it by the angels—when the great barons checked them, and rode through the smoke filled streets to begin the struggle with the fire. Ville-Hardouin relates what happened then:

"The marquis Boniface of Montserrat rode along the shore, straight toward the Bucoleon; and when he appeared there, the palace was surrendered, those within being spared their lives. There were found the greater part of the high born ladies, who had fled to the castle—and the sister of a king of France, who had been empress, and the sister of the king of Hungary who also had been empress.

"The Blachernae surrendered to Henry, brother of Count Baldwin. There also was found a treasure past reckoning, as in the Bucoleon. Each of these lords garrisoned his palace with his own men and placed a guard over the treasure.

"And the other men, scattered through the city, also won a great deal. The booty was so vast that no one could count it—the gold, the silver, the vessels of precious stones, the satins, the silks, the garments of vair and ermine.

"Each one took up quarters where he pleased, and there was no lack of places. Great was their joy in the victory that God had given them, for those who had been poor were now full of riches and delight. And they did well to praise our Lord, for with no more than twenty thousand men they had taken captive four hundred thousand or more.

"Then it was cried through all the army by the marquis Boniface who was chief of the army and by the barons and by the Doge of Venice that all this wealth must be brought and collected together, as had been promised and pledged, under pain of excommunication. And three churches were chosen as the places, and put under guard of the most trustworthy French and Venetians. And then each one began to bring in his trove and put it with the rest.

"Some did it willingly, and some with an ill grace; for greed held them back, and the greedy began henceforth to keep things back, and so our Lord began to love them less. Ah, God, how loyally they had borne themselves until this moment. And now the good suffered on account of the evil.

"The wealth and the booty was collected. The part belonging to the churches was gathered together and divided between the French and the Venetians, half and half, as they had agreed. And do you know how the rest was divided? Two men at arms on foot had the share of one mounted man at arms; two mounted men shared with one knight. And know that not a single man, whatever his rank or prowess, had more than that—unless he stole it.

"As to these thieves, the ones who were convicted, great justice was done upon them, and plenty of them were hung. The count of St. Paul hung one of his knights, shield upon his neck, who had kept out something. You can know how great was the treasure, not counting what was stolen or went to the share of the Venetians, when it was reckoned at four hundred thousand marks of silver, and ten thousand horses."

FOR THE moment, the glitter of Constantinople dazzled the eyes of the adventurers. Each man found himself with more wealth than he could manage to take care of, and at their feet lay the Queen City, violated and defenseless. Even the clergy, exulting at their possession of the rival Greek sanctuaries, applauded them:

"We say to you that the war is good and just. And if you mean faithfully to conquer this land and bring it to obedience to Rome, you will have the indulgence that the Pope promised you—all those who die here confessed."

And that, Ville-Hardouin says, was a great comfort to the barons and the pilgrims.

But Dandolo had no illusions. When they met to select one among them as emperor of the new conquest, he would not have his name put forward, and he instructed the Venetians serving in the electoral college to oppose the name of the marquis of Montserrat—who was too politic and too powerful a man to be acceptable to the republic. So, when the electors came to a decision the bishop of Soissons went out to the waiting Crusaders at midnight and cried.

"Seigneurs, we are agreed, and we name for emperor, in this hour of Eastertide, Count Baldwin of Flanders and of Hainault!"

A straightforward and simple soul. In the ensuing division of lands among the leaders of the Crusade, the Venetians and Montserrat profited most. Baldwin himself was awarded little more than half the city of Constantinople; the Venetians had the remainder, with the rich Sancta Sophia. Somehow or other Dandolo convinced the barons that two-fifths of the city must be put in possession of the Venetians before dividing the outlying territory.

Montserrat got northern Greece, and the other lords received various cities, with the accompanying titles of duke or seigneur. But these outlying cities were not yet conquered, and most of them never beheld their new feudal lords. The Byzantines, preparing to defend Asia Minor under Lascaris, and the Bulgars pressing in from the north waged war on the victors.

But the astute Venetians gleaned a great harvest for themselves—portions of Greece and the city of Durazzo, with the rich Ionian islands to the south, Corfu and the three keys to the gulf of Corinth, Cephalonia, Zante and Santa Maura. This gave them control of the Ionian sea, as well as the Adriatic. They received other ports and islands with the peninsula of Gallipoli which commanded the Dardanelles. They took Adrianople, north of Constantinople, and Dandolo squeezed in the island of Crete, by secret treaty with Boniface.

The Venetians gained more than even Dandolo could have hoped for, and they laid thereby the foundations for their great sea empire.* For awhile the council of Venice pondered moving the Serene Republic from the lagoons to Constantinople.

This done, they were more than ready to assist at the coronation of Baldwin, who was to be, in their scheme of things, the police power of their new conquests. The soldier was to fulfil the duties of a soldier. For three weeks the adventurers prepared robes and regalia for the ceremony, and one Robert of Clari has left an account of Baldwin's crowning in the vast Sancta Sophia, under the dome

*Visitors to Venice will recall the trophies of this conquest, displayed by the city—the bronze horses atop St. Mark's, the group of porphyry kings at the corner of the church. And the great paintings in the Ducal palace, showing the storming of Constantinople and the crowning of Baldwin by the hand of the Doge, instead of by the bishops who actually performed the ceremony.

where mosaic saints looked down through drifting incense with incurious eyes.

"When the day was come, they mounted their horses, and the bishops and the abbots and all the high barons went to the palace of Bucoleon. Then they conducted the emperor to the church of Sancta Sophia, and when they arrived at the church they led the emperor around it, into a chamber. There they took off his garments and boots, and they shod him anew in footgear of vermillion satin. Then they clad him, over the other garments, in a rich mantle all charged with precious stones, and the eagles which were outside were made of precious stones, and they shone so bright, it seemed as if the mantle were alight.

"When he was thus nobly clad, they led him before the altar, the count Louis carrying his imperial gonfalon, and the count of St. Paul carrying his sword, and two bishops holding up the arms of the marquis who carried the crown.

"And the barons were all richly clad, for there was neither Frenchman nor Venetian who had not a robe of satin or silk. And when the emperor went before the altar, he kneeled, and they lifted the mantle from him.

"When he was anointed, they put back the mantle on his shoulders. Two bishops held the crown upon the altar, then all the bishops went and took the crown and blessed it and made the sign of the cross upon it and put it on his head. When they had crowned him, they seated him upon a high chair, and he was there all the time mass was sung, holding in his hand the scepter and in the other hand an apple of gold with a little cross atop it.

"And then they led him out, to a white horse, and brought him back to his palace of the Bucoleon, seating him in the chair of Constantine. The tables were placed, and the emperor ate, and all the barons with him, in the palace. When he had eaten, the barons went away to their dwellings and the emperor remained alone in his palace."

Apart from the people of the West, the young Baldwin with his wife Maria, sat on the throne of the East. But he was never emperor in more than name. Like his namesake, the first Baldwin who ruled Jerusalem, he spent his days in the saddle, riding from one menaced point of his frontier to another, with the Byzantines clutching at his back, and his lords spending their lives in vain attempts to conquer the fiefs he had bestowed upon them. The Roman clergy came in and tried to reconcile the Byzantine priesthood to the new order, but they could not. The patriarchs of Constantinople abandoned their churches rather than submit. And the spoil taken from the half desolate city was soon spent.

Hundreds of the adventurers went off to Syria, to redeem their vows, and Baldwin himself died in battle against the czar of the Bulgars.

For two generations the barons of the West dwelt in the half deserted palaces along the Bosphorus, but their venture had ceased to be a Crusade. It became a feudal state, a colony of the West, and in the end Constantinople drove them forth again.

* * *

So, for the first time, by the treachery of the Venetians, a Crusade had been turned aside from Jerusalem. The great Crusade power had been bridled and driven to other work in 1204.

And Innocent, who had gained Constantinople and lost Jerusalem, launched Crusades of his own at home against heretics and enemies, leaving the Crusaders in the Holy Land to face what was in store for them.

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE OF VOODOOISM

By CHARLES A. FREEMAN

EVEN to scratch the surface of West India voodooism, one must go vagabonding among the islands, and win the liking of the people. The negro will talk but little of such things to the white man who is merely passing through the country, as a traveler well provided with funds. But let the white man be poor, perhaps on the beach, and he will hear much.

An inopportune laugh will immediately check conversation along the lines of the occult. And such conversation will not be resumed. Questioning is not resented. In fact questions will be answered as far as the narrator possesses understanding of that which for ages has been a mystery.

Of course, authenticated stories of the power of the *zebbas*, priests and priestesses of the Black Art, sometimes find their way into the West Indian press. For example there is that of the Porto Rican woman residing at San Pedro Macoris in the Dominican Republic, who in 1925 murdered her husband. The murderess emptied a cistern behind her house, broke out the concrete bottom, and concealed the body beneath. Then she replaced the concrete, and refilled the cistern with water.

Next, the murderess reported to the police that her husband was missing, and made quite a stir over locating him. To throw off suspicion entirely, she then announced her intention of motoring to Haiti there to consult a famous *zebba*. This individual she stated might be able to disclose the whereabouts of the missing man, or at least to state what had become of him.

The journey was made. The *zebba*, an ancient negro, listened to the story, and gazed into the woman's face. Concealed outside the cabin lay the chauffeur intent on hearing what might be said.

Finally the *zebba* rose and grasped the woman's shoulders.

"Why do you come to me," he asked, "when you know that you killed him and placed his body in a cistern?"

Frightened, the chauffeur hastened back to the car, just in time to see the woman emerging from the cabin. She demanded that she be driven back to the Dominican Republic in haste. And the chauffeur stepped on the gas. At the border members of the national guard halted the car for the usual search for contraband. And to them the chauffeur poured out his story. Despite her protestations the woman was taken to the

capital and lodged in jail. The search was made at the place indicated by the chauffeur and the body was found.

The trial of the murderess lasted for weeks and attracted much attention because of the voodooism involved, but finally she was convicted, and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment. The death penalty is not demanded under the Dominican legal code. But how could that *zebba*, hundreds of miles away, know of what had happened? It is a question hard to answer. And can the average native be blamed for believing implicitly in the occult?

From what I have been able to gather, voodooism, which in one form or other is common throughout the West Indies, does not center in Haiti as many suppose. The town of Roseau on the island of Dominica is the recognized headquarters, and the meeting place of the leaders of different cults is on Mont Coki-o-co—Devil's Hill—in the island of St. Lucia.

Each cult has its respective name and particular powers. These cults are respectively the Gens Gáge, the Zebba, the Obeah, the Sucrians, La Physique, La Diablesse (feminine), the Esprit, the Monderouse and Diablo.

When the West Indian negro wishes to punish or kill one who has offended him, he seldom performs the act himself, as the justice of the courts is sharp and swift. One hangs for murder under the British flag. And so the negro seeks revenge through his *zebbas*. Never is a mark of violence left on a *zebba's* victim.

When in rare cases a Santa Lucian negro does commit a crime of violence, he will, if he has the opportunity, seek to escape by a strange method. As described to me, the fugitive locates a powerful *zebba*, paying or promising to pay him for his services. The *zebba* then places a basin of water on the ground and makes incantations in a half forgotten African tongue. Next he places the fugitive with the man's back toward the basin, and commands him to leap backward over it.

The fugitive leaps. If he finally finds himself on the island of Martinique, it is a sign that he leaped well; but if he drowns in the ocean . . . Draw your own conclusions as to this *zebba's* power, which reads like a paragraph from the Arabian Nights. But it is a fact that criminals escape from St. Lucia in a manner which puzzles the authorities.

TAKEN categorically, and according to belief, the Gens Gáge have the power to fly. Also to communicate at great distances. They place poison at the gate of a victim, and the barefooted negro who steps on it contracts elephantiasis, or the horrible "big foot" of the tropics. They send cattle diseases, and assume animal shapes as well. At night a wayfarer may meet a big dog in the road who disputes his passage. If he takes a stick to the animal the beast changes back to human form and beats him terribly. Gens Gáge also send a victim to commit suicide by drowning, or cause him to swell as if with the dropsy.

Though the British government particularly tries hard to extirpate belief in voodooism, it pervades even the courts of justice, and clogs the wheels of the law. The French authorities recognize it as irradicable.

Zebba cultists can not fly. Only the Gens Gáge are believed to have that power; but the former work by means of charms. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred legal cases handled under *zebba* advice result favorably. Zebba activities feature in getting a person into a job, or out of one. Five grains of corn, manipulated in a certain manner, are used in this cult's work. It also uses medicines compounded from the tops or leaves of shrubbery.

Obeah cultists work by means of beads or medicinal roots. They are able to ruin a farmer by destroying his crops. A cow treated by Obeah may appear to be fat, but when killed will be found to be little but skin and bones.

Berkly, a boss Obeah adept, who was

finally run down a few years ago in St. Lucia and who died in jail, was credited with killing many people. For months he evaded detectives, appearing at one end of the island at dawn and at the other at noon. How, no one can tell.

The Sucrians have the power to imitate voices. Both male and female figure in this evil cult which is that of vampires, draining the blood from their victims. A Sucrian may cause a door to be opened by speaking with the voice of a loved one, and if struck at with a knife the weapon rebounds and strikes he who wields it. To kill a Sucrian one must use a silver bullet provided by a *zebba*.

The werwolf superstition of the Canadian woods seems closely connected with that of the Sucrians, who are said to take on animal shapes. A case of alleged murder brought before a St. Lucian court produced evidence that the man accused had shot at a black dog, and that the next day a woman was found dead of buckshot wounds.

La Physique is not properly speaking a cult. Rather it is an evil spirit raised by a *zebba* to punish a person for the non-payment of wages or some other offense. It takes the form of *poltergeist* manifestation—broken dishes, noises, etc. And it will not cease until the *zebba* is placated.

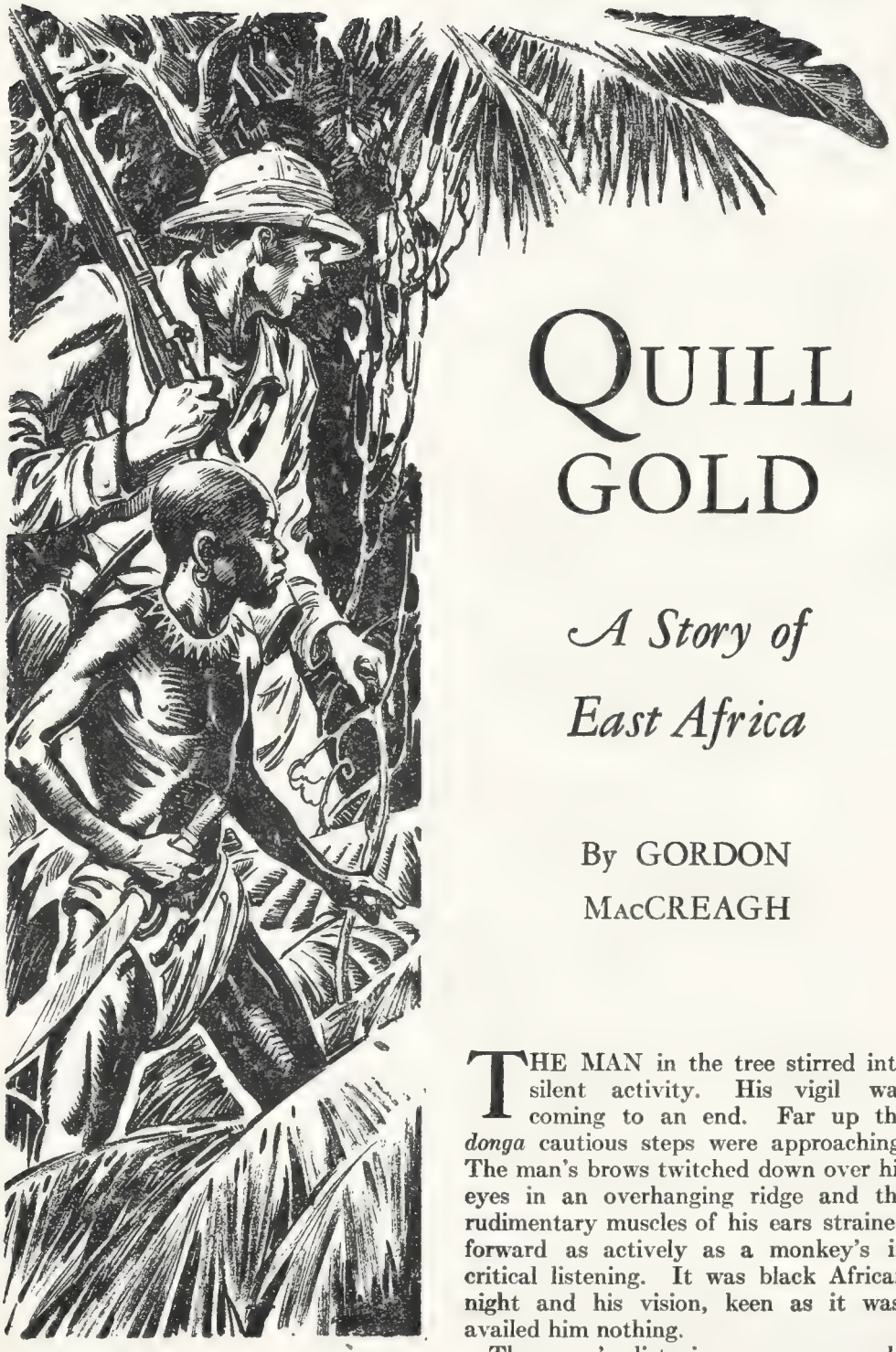
La Diablesse is another spirit manifestation, but visible to the eye. Its spirits work only by day, and are said to have one human and one animal foot. They move a half-inch above the ground, and are thought to be the lost souls of unbaptized children, much as are the *tjanuks* of the Philippines. Like the *tjanuks* they lead people astray and then laugh at their predicament.

Persons misled by La Diablesse are frequently children, and those are unable to find their way home unless they turn their garments inside out. In St. Lucia children are closely watched at noon and cautioned to stay at home for fear of these malignant spirits.

Undoubtedly the Monderouse or Sea Devil cult is the most dangerous of all, for in return for a plentiful catch of fish each day, the Sea Devil must have a human life at stated intervals. Fishermen have been known to sacrifice their own children to meet the demands of Monderouse. If the fisherman having dealt with the Sea Devil cult fails to make the sacrifice on or before the date prescribed, then he must never be found on the sea after noon or his own life will pay the penalty.

La Diablesse is only a cult able to frighten by taking on the appearance of the devil. Flames, hoofs, horns, and glaring eyes are all featured in its workings.

And all this goes on in the 20th century —the era of airplanes and radio. Drums are still booming out their strange messages in Haiti and British Guiana, and witchcraft continues to take its toll. I have only scratched the surface of voodooism.



QUILL GOLD

A Story of East Africa

By GORDON MacCREAGH

THE MAN in the tree stirred into silent activity. His vigil was coming to an end. Far up the *donga* cautious steps were approaching. The man's brows twitched down over his eyes in an overhanging ridge and the rudimentary muscles of his ears strained forward as actively as a monkey's in critical listening. It was black African night and his vision, keen as it was, availed him nothing.

The man's listening was nervously tense; he must make no mistake about

those steps. A leopard strolling carelessly to his lie-up after his hunting might dislodge loose pebbles just like that. So might a hamadryas baboon, for that matter; or even a bush bok—and he had known both those latter beasts upon occasion to have mysterious night errands. He didn't want to fire at any such inadvertent decoy and so give warning to the whole neighborhood.

The strained ears relaxed, the brows retreated and the man nodded. There was no mistake now. Those cautious steps were man—and booted: white man. Surely, therefore, *the* man. No other would walk so cat-like down the rock and pebble strewn bed of a *donga* by night. The watcher's eyelids screwed in a silent grin.

He took advantage of a flurry of wind down the ravine to shift his position in the low crotch of his tree and to wrap his legs more securely round the limb while he hitched his gun to the fore—a shotgun; he was taking no chances with a rifle in the tricky dark.

From the *donga's* steep lip above him a thin drizzle of sand pattered sharply through the sparse leaves of the man's tree. Startled, he peered upward and showed angrily clenched teeth.

The tree was a half naked limbed euphorbia that had long ago found lodgment in a crevice close to the steep *donga* wall, had grown to its height and now sent its sprawling roots out in a vain hunt for sufficient nourishment among the washed out rocks and sand, and struggled to maintain clumps of undersized leaves on its gaunt arms.

Against the dense net of stars the man could distinguish the dark grotesques of the leaf masses and the thick roadways of the twisted branches. Up at these he snarled in silent rage. Above all things he did not want to be disturbed just at that vital moment.

What the devil and all might have loosened that sandfall?

He could see nothing other than the fantastic tree shapes. His quick twitching ears could hear nothing more. In angry anxiety he peered and reasoned through a swift elimination of causes.

Elimination was really quite easy; at all events of all the larger and possibly dangerous causes. Lions would not be stalking along a *donga* edge. A prowling leopard would have caused a landslide. A porcupine was a clumsy beast, too. A jackal would have made more noise. It must have been one of the lesser cats—a genet probably, walking, as they love to, along the sheer edge of nothing. Or the wind alone might well have dislodged the little sand shower; the wind was swishing quite briskly down the ravine now. Anyway, if it had been some beast he would have heard it again.

The man grunted and settled to concentrate on the important business in hand. He must be sure and let no bungle spoil the thing. Down this *donga* his man—*the* man—must come. For twenty miles it cut a dry road—like a vast trench, twenty feet across and forty deep—through the plain till it tumbled in a huge succession of straggling leaps down the escarpment to Lake Rudolf. There was no other road because innumerable smaller *dongas*, scoured out by the monsoon rain, emptied into this main artery and cut up the plain into a crazy checkerboard.

And past that tree the man must come; past that patch of white sand where his bulk would show up in the starlight a sure mark—an almost sure mark—for a shotgun.

That was why the man in the tree had chosen just that tree. Because its very sparseness of foliage gave a clear view and because a tree offered a good deal more security than a rock ambush in case of any mischance. There would be a safe opportunity for a second shot to remedy any mischance; and that was a matter of vital importance.

For that other man who stepped so cautiously down the dry *donga* was the very devil. Cunning as a leopard and as uncannily fast, so the stories ran. The natives had the most incredible tales to relate about his prowess. Of course those

were just native yarns, the man in the tree knew; but there was a sufficiency of other evidence about the fellow to make this night ambush business a matter of quite some nervous strain. A mistake, a bungle, might mean . . . The watcher drew in his breath sharply to think just what it might mean.

THE THICK, empty branches above him creaked in the night wind. Distorted limbs they were, twisted in the throes of malnutrition; swollen with huge warty growths like the limbs of similarly undernourished natives who suffered from elephantiasis. They creaked and groaned as in pain, as if in slow, heaving efforts to rid themselves of their parasitic encumbrances.

They seemed to succeed. A great wart that lay along one of the dim branches silhouetted against the *donga* rim shook loose and dropped swiftly to a lower limb, where it clung lumpily, as though loath to leave its parent host.

In its quick transition against the skyline it might have been anything; huge fragment of moss and orchid root, or leopard, or more likely ape. Only, had it been moss it would hardly have landed so fortuitously on the next limb.

But the watcher was not watching the skyline. He was straining his eyes up the dark *donga* bottom to catch those footsteps.

The footsteps came softly nearer; picking their way with an instinctive habit of noiselessness. They dragged interminably; hesitant, feeling out, cautious. Damn it, why couldn't the fellow hurry up and get the thing over with?

The tree man's tension grew. He rubbed his thumb over the bead of his shotgun to renew its luminosity. It didn't satisfy him. With a jerky movement he snatched a tiny vial of radium paint from his shirt pocket and daubed a hasty spot on the bead. That didn't satisfy him either; but, curse it, it would have to do; he couldn't go fooling over the niceties now.

The footsteps were on the very edge of that patch of white sand now. In another second the bulk of the man ought to loom dark against the pale floor. With infinite caution the watcher pushed his gun barrel to the fore—that other man was said to have a diabolical hearing. The clumsy luminous patch on the bead glowed a broad smudge—no sort of a sight. Still, at that range, a shotgun and a charge of buckshot ought to settle the business without any mishap. Just one more second, now.

It was an interminable second. A nerve racking passage of long drawn out time. At the very edge of the patch of sand the footsteps hesitated. The man was there, somewhere in the black shadow; but no farther would he come.

A foliage mass above the tree watcher's head swished more violently than was permissible to the wind. The watcher squinted a quick glance upward; but looked as quickly away again. His every faculty was focused now on the edge of that patch of sand. He dared not be distracted. His hands holding that devastating shotgun at point trembled with pent excitement. Those damnable footsteps! Instead of coming on they seemed to be climbing to skirt that pale target patch. Curse the fellow; could it be possible that anybody could be so inhumanly cautious?

The watcher with a frenzied snarl moved his finger from off the trigger. It was shaking with the man fever which is vastly more potent than buck fever. There must be no such awful mischance as an accidental discharge into nothing. Deadly sure the very first shot would have to be; with a possible second shot for the native who would be with the man—though that didn't matter a whole lot. It was the other man—*the* man—who was as clever as the devil and more to be feared. Yes, without fail and absolutely the first shot must settle the devil's hash. The shaky finger steadied itself with a quivering effort and began to curl round the trigger once more. The

watcher concentrated all his faculties on the edge of that shadow.

And then out of the shadow the man who was as clever as the devil whistled shrilly like an avenging fiend. Out of the foliage mass above the watcher's head with a scramble and a crash fell a black demoniac shape that screamed and wrapped prehensible legs round the watcher's neck and clawed at his face and eyes.

THE WATCHER'S pent up nervousness broke from him in a choked shout—the indrawn, strangled cry of sudden, startled horror. The twittery fingers cramped in a convulsive grip. Both barrels of the shotgun roared into the night. Watcher and screeching incubus fell from the tree to the ground and disintegrated into two shadows, a large bulky one and a small shriveled one. The bulky one lurched to its feet and dashed down the ravine.

Out of that other blackness above the sand patch leaped the long shadow of the man who was the very devil. Two lithe bounds he took across the sand patch, and then fell cartwheeling over a rope that stretched across the *donga* and lay dazed. Instantly the small shriveled shadow scuttled to him and fussed over him with crooning noises and clucks of dismay.

"Shut up," muttered the fallen man dizzily. "Make a light." He sat up. "No, don't make a light—I must be silly. Golly, what a smash I came!"

The smaller figure was anxiously reassuring.

"Nay, *bwana*, a light is safe. Listen, he still runs and he is already far. Moreover in his haste he left his gun lying."

"Even so a light is not safe," the man insisted; and to himself he commented, "A jasper who's careful enough to stretch a rope to cover his getaway on the slim chance of his having to make a break is smart enough to have a couple more tricks in his hat. I've been a fool once to get caught by the rope trick; I don't give him another easy chance with a light. Wonder who he was and why he was laying for me?"

"He was a white man, *bwana*."

"Huh? What's that? How do you know he was a white man? There are no other white men within a day's trek."

"I smelled him, *bwana*."

The tall man chuckled; he knew the African claim that white men have a distinctive and unpleasant odor. Then he reproved:

"You are a wise little ape, Kaffa, but also a fool. If you had obeyed my order we would have caught this mysterious assassin who is a white man. My order was to throw stones upon him."

"Yes, *bwana;* and indeed I had a stone as big as a small goat all ready—"

"My order was small stones."

"Yes, *bwana*, small stones was the order. But, waiting up there, I heard the two clicks of his making a gun ready; and that goatherd boy had said no word of a white man with a gun; only that a man waited in the dark in such and such a tree. So I, knowing that *bwana* came without suspicion of a gun, I climbed softly into the tree and—"

"It was well intended, little ape man, though you muffed it. Had I required violence I would have sent Barounggo with his throwing spears."

"Yes, *bwana*. Barounggo would surely have torn his throat out, had he once placed hands upon him. But, *bwana*, it is also sure that Barounggo could never have climbed into that tree."

"True, thou very ape; that was well done. And for the doing and the foolish intention there will be a gift—a new blanket with stripes of many colors. Also we must find a gift tomorrow for that goatherd boy who shouted his news and ran so fearfully away."

The smaller shadow stooped quickly and clasped the tall man's knees to chatter his thanks.

"Shush, shush! Cut it out," growled the tall man. "For service there is reward. It will be wise now to get out of this *donga* back to camp to tell that

Masai blood letter what a fight he has missed. And tomorrow we shall come to the *dipty c'mishna bwana* to ask what manner of men are in his district who lie in ambush for people with guns."

LATE the following evening the tall man's compact little *safari* halted in front of the gate in the barbed wire square that was the official residence of Mr. Sydney Fawcett, assistant commissioner of the West Rudolf district of Uganda. The very black, khaki uniformed Kavirondo who stood sentry at the gate grinned and presented arms, and incontinently left his post to announce the visitor.

The tall man gave terse orders to his *safari*.

"Barounggo, make camp well away from the village, and give to each *shenzi* a portion of meat with his *potio*. They have come well this day's trek. Kaffa, it will not be necessary to prepare a meal; I eat with the *c'mishna bwana*."

The man Barounggo, an enormous Masai, lifted a huge spear in salute and herded the porters off. Kaffa, the shadow of the *donga* episode, a Hottentot as shriveled and monkey-like as the Masai was big and fierce, grinned and trotted after them.

Assistant Commissioner Sydney Fawcett, who, six months ago had greeted the announcement of this man's presence with the worried query, "Good God, what does that pestilent man want here?" came out into his veranda to wave and call:

"Why, it's Mr. King, no less. I've been expecting you for some days. Come on in, old man, and tell me all the news of what is going on in the farther corners of this district which I govern."

Relaxed in a long cane chair, sipping the tepid whisky peg of tropic hospitality, the man King remarked with affected unconcern, although there was a question behind it—

"So you were expecting me?"

The assistant commissioner chuckled.

"Yes indeed, Kingi Bwana, and by all means I was expecting you. Surprised, what? Wasn't it yourself who taught me how to listen for bush telegraph?"

The level brows flicked once, the wide mouth drew tight and then King laughed with a shamefaced expression that was unusual to his hard angled face.

"Glad you made so apt a pupil. And that, incidentally, explains also a mysterious bird who tried to dry gulch me last night."

"I don't at all know what your curious language means, Kingi Bwana, but tell me about it."

King related the facts of the attempted ambush and wound up with—

"But how the devil could he know so accurately just what road I'd be going?"

Mr. Sydney Fawcett was serious. Killing of any sort shocked the dignity of British law and order; and an attempt to assassinate a white man within a days' trek of the very seat of government was an outrage. So unprecedented an offense that the assistant commissioner ventured to censure even the innocent near victim, as being to blame for luring that kind of character into his well administered district.

"Now, Kingi Bwana, really my dear fellow, you deserve a lesson. You're so bally confident that nobody knows your comings and goings that you've slipped up at last. Look here, old man, I know—even I, government official—know that you're going to some place back of the Assaua River country. I don't know what for—as yet—but I've been waiting for you."

King's cold gray eyes narrowed.

"Well, I'm glad the bush talk didn't have my plans all drawn up and blue printed. But they might easily have guessed. I got hold of a story about some few hundred quills of gold back there. What else ever happens in those back woods but gold and ivory?"

"Well, there you are, my dear man. Quill gold. That meant, of course, that you would be coming here to get a permit to buy that gold from the natives at

whatever rate you could haggle me down to; for all of Africa knows that you're not fool enough to try to bargain the natives down to trashy trade goods and hope to smuggle the stuff out of the country."

Quick wrinkles appeared round King's eyes and he pinched his lips together.

"Thanks for the kind opinion," he drawled. "Not but what a wide awake man could get away with it without straining a sinew; but you paternal government fellows are so damned vindictive when you find out."

"Confident King," jeered the official.

King's face hardened to weather stained oak.

"Yep, I guess I've got that coming to me I've been careless somewhere and the underground has got hold of the talk of my going, though my own men don't know what I'm going for. I eat dust, O most transcendent of pupils; and from now on you can write me down in your official record as the king clam . . . So then, having accounted for a broadcast of my route, what in thunder d'you think this well meaning gent wanted to bushwhack me for?"

THE ASSISTANT commissioner blew out his cheeks.

"Kingi Bwana, your innocence these days astounds me. You don't mean to tell me that you imagine everybody in all of Africa loves you for being a stiff necked, nosey Yankee?"

"From North Dakota," murmured King. "But I'm innocent no more. I was just getting careless in the security of your law abiding colony. This discriminating gent's gun, by the way, is a Ballard, London, twelve bore hammerless ejector, No. 47029; and he uses Kynoch shells. Seems to be no sort of a fool all round. I'll get some of my witch doctor friends to send out the quiet inquiry about such a man; and I won't bother you about him any more. Now what's this talk that you've been waiting for me?"

"I want you to do a small job for me."

King raised an eyebrow.

"Official?"

"Well—er—semi-official," admitted Mr. Fawcett, and added quickly, "but I won't ask you to write a report and I won't offer to put you on the emergency payroll—I know your stiff necked independence. It's just that you're going there anyhow, and the man is one of your pestilent countrymen."

"Ha!" King nodded with immediate understanding. "A missionary is in trouble again. What's the matter this time? Somebody going to hot pot him, and his society will plague my government to plague your government to plague you? What crowd does this man belong to?"

"It's not that bad this time, friend cynic. He's a 'Sudan Interior' man—he ought not to be so far south anyhow. But since he is, it's my *shauri*. He complains about obstruction, fights with his converts, boycott, petty thieving of mission crops, and all the usual smoke before the fire. His place is at the junction of the Imbobo with the Assaua. So since you'll be somewhere in the neighborhood, I wish you would keep your ears open and let me know quietly what it's all about."

King stretched his big shoulders and relaxed. As long as no official cooperation with its attendant red tape was asked of him, he was glad to oblige. He did not know that the shrewd old governor of the colony had long ago sent voluminous and confidential instructions to the assistant commissioner that if he could but inveigle this masterless man into a little freelance information gathering, King would go to endless trouble, would take all responsibility for his safety on his own easy shoulders, and would furnish cooperation more valuable than any official on the staff.

"Sure," said King. "Glad to oblige. I'm strong for missionaries anyhow; I always figure that converting the heathen to religion with a book is no worse than converting him to civilization with a gun.

The heathen don't care much for either; and the book men have a lot bigger percentage of good eggs than the gun men."

The assistant commissioner laughed.

"You are already docketed officially, my Kingi Bwana," he told the other sententiously, "as a revolutionary, an obstructionist, an anti-imperialist, and a stiff necked Yankee. But if you find out for me just what the festive heathen on the sunny banks of the Assaua are thinking about I shall not ask my government to deport you on the grounds of being a menace to the administration."

"Thanks again," said King. "I'll see what I can do to help out my persecuted countryman."

THE VULTURES wheeling against the blue steel sky inspected the *safari* with experienced criticism. They swung a couple of wide circles above it and then set their fringed planes to the exact fractional angle against the wind and with magnificent effortlessness were removed in one vast swoop ten miles from that place, where they wheeled again.

There was nothing to interest them in this *safari*. It was small—barely a dozen men—compact, no straggling. At the head strode a tall white man; by his side trotted a wizened Hottentot; behind them came the porters, treading almost on one another's heels; and the rear was brought up by an immense spear man who saw to it that the endless straggling of the usual African *safari* was nipped before it ever started.

There was no profit for vultures in such a *safari*. They were more interested in their new prospect. The Hottentot pointed to where, pin points in the clear air, they banked in their great circles.

"Village," he said.

The white man shook his head.

"You know better than that, little monkey man. If it was a village they would be there all the time. It is a camp."

"Yes, Bwana, it is a camp—" the Hottentot snatched up dust and slapped his mouth with it. "My head knows, but the words tumbled from my mouth without permission."

The *safari* plodded on. After an hour the Hottentot ventured again—

"A white man's camp and belonging to one who has little experience."

"And how do you judge that, O wise little ape?"

"Natives would not stay so long in one place by day; the birds would have descended to feast upon the leavings. And as for experience—our camps, *bwana*, have no such devil's attendants."

King chuckled.

"That time your head kept watch over your mouth. I guess you're right. And out of your wisdom tell me now this: White men are few in this country; would it be perchance the camp of that white man whom you smelled in the tree by night?"

"No, *bwana*. That man had much experience."

"Right again," said King. "So we don't prepare for war. But we might as well be careful. Barounggo, hold back the *shenzis* a half hour and come in prepared to make a diversion if need be."

The great Masai lifted his spear and barked at the porters. King and the Hottentot went on.

In another half hour the camp became visible. There was a white man's tent, ill pitched and sagging. It was surrounded by an astonishing number of piles of baggage in disorderly heaps, covered over with oddments of canvas and tarpaulin. Native boys in unusual and unnecessary numbers lounged all over the place.

The Hottentot clucked his tongue against his palate.

"My mouth spoke wrong again. It said little experience. This *mzungu* has no experience."

The word in itself indicated the quick African reaction to that indefinite but vital thing, prestige. It meant merely white man, as differentiated from *bwana* —white master.

"Hm. Queerest camp I've seen," grunted King. "The man has men and

equipment enough for a huge *safari* with headmen, leaders and whatnot; yet there seems to be nobody to handle things."

As the two came nearer, the herd of lounging boys looked at them with the furtive curiosity of the native, but with no other outward sign. They lounged and lay about in their established indolence; whereas it is customary in the bush for *safari* men—at least those in the direct path—to rise in deference to a white man's coming.

"These cattle," said the Hottentot, "need a one such as Barounggo to prick respect through their hides."

A boy who squatted on his heels near the tent rose and, without standing at the flap to ask permission, ducked within. In a moment a white man came out; and his appearance at once explained everything to both the newcomers.

"Ow, it is a *mon-perea*," murmured the Hottentot.

King advanced to the white man with equal certitude.

"I guess you'll be the Reverend Eli Wallace. Howdy. My name's King. Fawcett asked me to look in on you."

The missionary was delighted.

"An American, by all that is wonderful! Why, what a good fortune to temper my misfortune."

"Mm-hm," assented King. "It does look like trouble around here. Your boys seem to be a good bit out of hand. I suppose you can feed a starving stranger! Then let's sit down and tell me all about it."

"Oh, no," the missionary fussed. "I mean—oh, yes, of course, I can still offer you my small hospitality—David, tell cook boy make water hot, please . . . But I mean, my boys are good boys; they're my little flock, you know. No, the trouble is not with them—they're good lads."

King brought his frowning eyes back from a survey of the slipshod camp and the lolling natives, and he laughed.

"The good black brother, eh? It's the old argument, *padre bwana*, between your people and we Africanders. My boys are good boys too; and I sometimes even tell them so, but we—well, we camp different. However, let's consider your troubles on the mend from now on, and after some chow you can tell me how they began."

BUT THE Reverend Mr. Wallace was not able to tell King very much; hardly anything, in fact, more than King already knew.

"Fawcett told me you'd been having the usual petty annoyances—and I know my obstreperous African well enough to know exactly what you've been up against. But what then?"

"Well, Mr. King, that's about all I know myself. It kept getting worse and worse; and I had to stand for the most humiliating indignities till—"

"Yeah, that's just it," King interrupted him. "You stood for it instead of socking some fresh black buck in the very beginning. The African will always try it, and he'll carry it as far as you'll let him. But, hell, it's no use ever arguing with you people about how to handle the African. Well, what did it grow into?"

"I don't really know, Mr. King. There was no violence—I mean, nothing against me personally—though my boys were constantly getting beaten up. And then, less than a week ago the whole village came in quite overwhelming numbers and—well, to make it short, they just expelled my converts; made them pack up everything in my mission house and escorted them a day's march out of the village and left them with threats of dire violence, should they return. Of course I came with them."

"Hm. You came of your own accord? No compulsion or anything?"

"No, I was not molested. But of course I came with my flock."

King's eyes narrowed in introspection.

"Pretty smooth," was his comment. "No violence against the white man. Only an expulsion of certain natives against whom they will swear women stealing and half a dozen different com-

munity offenses. Ever have any trouble with the chief?"

"Never, Mr. King. He is a man—Tembe Dawa is his name—a man of the average kind: fat and sensuous with a lot of young wives, and lazy and good natured. His attitude was one of amused tolerance as long as I didn't make an issue of polygamy."

"So? That argues a pretty intelligent coon, if you ask me. Have any run-in with the medicine man? How big a man is he in the tribe? Is he a society man—what mark, and so on?"

"I—really, Mr. King, I don't know exactly what—"

"No, you'd hardly know that, of course. Here, let me ask your boys. You, there—David is your name, isn't it? Come here . . ."

The man came forward slowly—as as slowly as he dared; though, as he felt King's level gaze, he speeded up till he stood, respectful but with suppressed insolence just under the surface of his whole being. He made round ox eyes at the questions about the local wizard and tried to pretend with African stolidity that he knew nothing about the man. King shrugged and turned to his Hottentot.

"You talk to him. Ask him what society the witch doctor belongs to."

The Hottentot addressed the man in a stream of quick, low invective that quickly convinced him that the master of such a servant was no white man to be fooled with like his own master. But he was honestly ignorant about witch society marks and a little nervous that this white man seemed to know about them.

"Ask him," said King quickly, "whether the *ba-tagati* uses the *muavi* poison magic?"

The mission boy's eyes rolled white at the question. He looked furtively round, then nodded fearfully.

"Hm, that's useful," muttered King. And to the missionary, "Apparently you've had no trouble with the witch doctor; at all events, no serious trouble, else you wouldn't look as healthy as you do. So then it sums up. No trouble with anybody, but continued obstruction, culminating in being thrown out on your ear. Gosh, what a wild and mysterious country is this Africa!"

He sat back and blew thoughtful smoke rings from his polished and intricately carved pipe. At intervals he whistled tunelessly through his teeth. What new enigma was this? What trivial circumstance, utterly obscure to the white man, had jarred upon the inexplicable native mind till it had built a mountain for itself that had eventually erupted into open resistance?

NATIVES in all of Africa were so accustomed to the white interlopers' vagaries these days that they no longer objected to the mere preaching of a new religion. They regarded that as an attendant evil as inescapable as the white man's insensate desire to regulate things and to collect hut taxes. It required something more personal, some more immediate interference with customs or rights, to arouse them to action for which they knew that, in the long run, there would be a penalty. Speculation on so vague a thing was hopeless. King jumped up.

"Tell you what's the only thing to do. I'll go to this Tembe chief's village and prowl around and see what I can pick up."

"Splendid," agreed the missionary. "I shall return with you."

King looked at him through narrowed lids, and then he nodded.

"*Padre bwana*, you've got all the nerve that your people always have and, like all of you, your nerve outruns your horse sense. Man, don't you realize that you haven't come of your own accord just to be with your flock? You've been thrown out—they're smart enough to know how you'd move. Now, both of us know that the African doesn't get that energetic unless something all red and mussy is in the back of his mind somewhere."

The missionary was calmly resolute.

"If there's danger, what about yourself? Besides, my place is—"

"Hooey." King cut him short. "You stick around with your boys here. If you ask me, you've got none too tight a hold on them, and if you leave 'em they'll melt away like that well known snowball. I'll light out in the morning with just my own boys. Besides, *I* haven't trod on that crowd's toes—not yet. And, anyway, I'm looking for gold to pay me for any risk that may happen along."

The missionary sighed as he looked over his lounging camp and was forced reluctantly to agree.

"Yes, my place is with my flock."

"Sure is," said King. "Just hold 'em down here awhile and we'll have you reestablished in your own mission house in the course of time. These things always blow over—the African can't hold a mad for very long . . .

"You say it's a day's trek? I'll leave my *safari* here with my Masai; I'll guarantee they won't bother you any and, incidentally, I kinda fancy your own boys may pep up a bit, too. I'll just hop over with the Hottentot and see what I can see. Guess I can get Chief Tembe to supply hut and feed for a couple of days. And, by the way, did you ever hear of any gold along your river?"

"Yes, indeed," said the missionary. "Every now and then some native would offer gold dust for medicine; but of course, I couldn't take any such remuneration for my services."

"Good," said King. "Well, I belong in the other side; I'm the unregenerate trader person who accepts all the remuneration I can get. So that'll make my visit profitable as well as interesting."

The missionary looked hard at King; and then suddenly he smiled and held out his hand.

"And yet, Mister Unregenerate Trader, you drop out of a blue sky and offer to help me for nothing."

King shrugged easily.

"Shucks, *padre bwana*. Your village will pay me with gold for the medicine that you give them for nothing."

IT WAS quite a big village. Some couple of hundred huts showed their untidy round roofs through prosperous looking banana groves that filled the wedge of land between two shrunken threads of yellow river that wound through wide, rain washed gravel beds.

Scars and scoops in the gravel and a twisty pattern of little canals, without forethought or design, indicated native industry. The wind brought the familiar and never to be forgotten effluvium of an African village left very much to itself.

King's surprised comment to himself was:

"Lot more workings than I had any idea. If that coon who brought the rumor down to Nairobi had reported anything like this, there'd have been half a dozen of the boys out on the jump. Looks like here's where I win out for taking the chance."

He strode on down to the village without any thought of misgiving. The petty disturbance against the missionary could be quietly sifted while he entered into the negotiations for what looked like a profitable trade.

But things were somehow not right in this village. At the outskirts King passed what was clearly the mission house, a wattle and mud hut like the rest, but much larger, much better built, with square walls and a peaked roof; a white man's building, in a square of methodically laid out garden.

The wrong thing about this house was that it seemed to be inhabited. If the natives had just ousted the owner and then left it alone, the thing would have been a normal indication of some passing unrest; but if they had taken possession so soon, that looked like a quite unusual determination that the missionary should not come back.

Two hundred yards farther, as King entered the first filthy lane between the straggly huts, there was a scurrying of

startled natives, a peering from dark, beehive doorways and a running of quick feet to convey the news farther up.

A man of less assurance might have wavered in his advance; might even have retreated. But retreat, King knew very well, would have meant a fatal loss of that prestige which is the white man's very necessary God in Africa; a loss that would necessitate years of spectacular daring to recover. And prestige, King knew, sheer white man's indomitable nerve, would hold a native mob in check in all circumstances except the one of crazy, screaming war.

He quietly slipped his rifle bolt to throw a cartridge into the chamber, shifted his pistol holster to the front and went on.

Men came running to meet him, surrounded him and kept pace with him, jabbering.

"Tell them," said King to the Hottentot, "that I am neither a policeman nor an assessor of hut taxes. I come to make trade talk for gold with the Chief Tembe Dawa."

The men merely jabbered more. Other men came; men of a different type. These villagers were thin legged, pot bellied Nilotic negroes. The newcomers were of a sturdier build, men from farther east, the sort that hung about Nairobi to hire out as *safari* men, more accustomed to white men and less impressionable to sheer prestige.

A swift suspicion flashed into King's mind; and at the same instant—before he could act on it—came the perfectly planned attack.

From somewhere out of sight somebody shouted an order. A black arm from behind flung itself about King's throat. Instantly a dozen paws clawed at him. Something hit him heavily on the head, and he knew no more . . .

WHEN King came to his senses he was in the dark, in pitch blackness. His head hummed still, but was clear; his hard trained constitution was such that he had never known a headache.

He was in a native hut—he could smell that; he was alone and — miracle — unbound. Listening carefully he was sure that no other person breathed within the hut. It was night outside, too; he could dimly distinguish the low oval of the door opening.

This was quite too good to be entirely true; there was some trick about the thing. King was never one to waste time in speculation when action was possible. He got cautiously to his feet—and then he knew.

A drag at his ankle and a clank told him in an instant that a chain held him. He sat down again and felt carefully with his fingers. Not with any hope. The man who had planned this thing was too smart to leave any such stupid loophole.

It was a white man, of course. That had been King's swift suspicion at the moment when he had been knocked unconscious. He cursed himself bitterly for a fool for having walked into a trap. Then he shrugged and composed himself to think the matter out during the hours before daylight. He felt for his pipe. His fingers found the carved bowl. But matches—means of making fire—had been carefully taken from him.

As he ruminated he began to recover his spirits. What had hurt him most was not that he was in a trap—traps could be gotten out of if one had ingenuity and nerve, and the faculty of quick action upon lightning thought. It was a blow to personal morale and confidence to know that he had walked like any tenderfoot into a trap—for nothing can cure foolishness. But reflection brought with it a certain justification.

How should anybody have suspected an unrest engineered by a white man, when the missionary who had but just come from the scene knew nothing of a white man's presence? The missionary, of course, was new to the interior and, being new, was still trusting and knew nothing about the innate secrecy of the black man in all his dealings with the white. But, even at that, this must be a particularly shrewd white man to have

hidden his presence—decidedly a clever white man and one who knew his African. King's eyes narrowed. Who might this white man, who knew his native so well, be? And why had he taken this so determined offensive?

As to why, guessing was not difficult. Wherever there was gold, there were presently to be found white men of every desperate breed who would do anything and would dare almost anything to get that gold, and to prevent anybody else from getting it.

As to who, King could only draw a parallel. That mysterious person of the night ambush in the *donga;* that man was unscrupulous enough, knew his Africa well enough, and was bold enough also to have engineered this feat. But, who?

With the thought that he must presently meet this man, a certain grim elation overcame any anxiety that King might have felt as to his own fate. Since he was still alive, there was clearly some reason for it. This man wanted something; he would come to get it. And when he came, well, who could tell what might happen—*if* one had ingenuity and nerve and the faculty of swift action upon lightning thought?

The man came with the early beginnings of morning. Voices jabbered outside, the low oval of the door opening was darkened for a moment, and then King could distinguish the bulk of a large man within the dimness of the hut. He took the initiative.

"My name's King," he drawled in the voice which he used to conceal his readiness for steel spring action. "Squat, won't you, and let's get down to business."

"Business—that's just what I came for." The man spoke a perfect English with only a faint trace of a queer accent that stressed consonants and stretched vowels. He remained standing near the door—too far for King to reach. "It is business that I want to talk with Mr. King, whom—er—I have great pleasure in meeting for the first time."

"First?" asked King lazily. "Didn't I flush you like a baboon from a tree in Lenkoko Donga a few nights ago?"

If this man could be insulted, bluffed, somehow, into losing his temper, many things might be possible.

The man only laughed.

"My dear chap, it hardly matters at this stage of the game, does it, whether you met somebody in a *donga* or no?"

"Just idle curiosity," murmured King "Matter of future identification. Finger prints on that excellent shotgun and all that sort of stuff."

It was a pure bluff, of course; but that idea of finger prints always stood out as such damning and ineradicable evidence. The man's laugh this time was less assured. King noted it like a hawk and, reassured by the man's uneasiness that he was on the right track, followed up his offensive. He was nonchalant, as though no stout iron chain held him to a thick stake in the floor of the hut.

"All right, let's get down to cases. And, so as not to waste time, let's get this clear. You haven't had me speared while I was dead to the world; and I know from the *donga* foozle that a little thing like that doesn't bother you. So there's one of two reasons: First, too many people know I'm here—the missionary and the commissioner, and you've been silly enough to leave too many tracks like shotguns and so on; second, you want something more'n you want my scalp. So cut out all the bluff and intimidation stuff and let's talk turkey."

THE MAN still contrived to laugh; but there was a snarl in his voice. King's close analysis of the situation with its implication of safety to himself was robbing his captor of his expected advantage.

"You are very clever, Mr. King. You analyze the situation very nicely. So clever that I follow your suggestion and do not try to bluff you. I admit that it would be very—er—inconvenient to have any accident happen to you just now. Therefore, since I, too, am not altogether a fool—as I think you will admit in turn—I want to talk business with you."

"Well, I'm in this country to do business." King was carelessly interested. "So come on in and sit down, and spill your proposition."

The man chuckled fatly out of the dimness.

"Really, Mr. King, you do not give me credit for any cleverness at all. This is three times now that you have tried to lure me into coming within your reach; and I have heard too many things about Kingi Bwana to be doing that just yet."

King hid his impatience under a laugh.

"I have already given you a plenty of credit, Mister Whoever-you-are, and my Hottentot has indorsed you very thoroughly."

"Ah, the Hottentot." The big dim shadow was genial. "A good boy you have there. I have heard of him too. He gave us a lot of trouble."

"I hope—" King's voice was steel—"I hope, and for your sake, Mister Whozis, that your gang hasn't hurt him."

"Oh, by no means, Mr. King. He bit and scratched like a small gorilla; but we knew we could capture him. It was out of compliment to you that we hit you on the head. No, your Hottentot is safe and well—and, as a matter of fact, since it is quite impossible for him to get away from here, you can have him to attend to your wants. You see, I am anxious to have nothing but the pleasantest relations with you."

King laughed out loud. The alert little Hottentot loose in the village, even though he could go no farther, was a decided ace in the hole. King considered his predicament practically solved. It remained only to keep this very wily person from becoming suspicious and changing his mind.

"Go ahead; shoot the works," he said.

"I am glad you are open to reason." The man drew a three cornered stool from the dimness of the hut and sat down, still out of reach. "I am quite sure that you already understand that we are both after the same thing. We both know what conditions the damned government sticks on to trading gold . . .

"Well, I'm not a fool. I want to do this trade right, so I laid low, of course, and got that fool of a Bible thumper out of the way—and a dashed persistent blighter he was, too. He gave me no end of trouble—just wouldn't get out until I exerted my strongest influence with the chief and had him quietly dispossessed. I was smart enough to manage that."

King was non-committal, yet cheerfully offensive.

"You must have quite a drag with the big smoke. Guess you've maybe come down to sitting in and sharing his mealie beer with him; that'll put you in solid with any of 'em. Well, that's your hard luck, not mine. Go ahead, mister, and shoot what crookedness you're aiming to pull."

The man was still able to force a laugh. From his very patience King deduced that his own neutrality was a much to be desired factor. But the man wanted more than neutrality.

"There is no crookedness, Mr. King. Only business. Now let me talk to you as one trader to another. There is more gold here than you think; enough to make a tidy little haul for both of us—if the business is conducted right."

King grunted. The man warmed to his subject. He was eloquent in his exposition of the age-old quarrel between the freelance man who worked for his immediate profit and the government man who worked for a vague, ultimate national profit.

"The right way, Mr. King, to conduct this business, is not the government way. I'll bet you that I can guess to a penny what rate the commissioner allowed you to offer for the gold. I'll bet you he considers it a just rate, making all allowances for distance and transportation and all that; and there'll be a reasonable profit for you in that rate.

"But dammit all, my dear fellow, we traders don't do our pioneer work and risk our lives in these blasted places for reasonable profits or for the good of the nigger man. We take our chances and we want our profit for ourselves and to get out of

the country as soon as possible. We're not paid by the government to live in comfortable security and build up colonial jobs for our sons to step into."

"Them's my sentiments," said King. "But—let's hear some more."

"Well, my dear chap, since you understand the thing, that's all there is to it. I propose to trade for this gold in the good old way, the trader way. And, since you are here and, I admit, a serious problem, I offer you a partnership in the trade. We can give Chief Tembe a few loads of gimcrackery and get over the Sudan border before anybody finds out about it, and everybody will be happy."

"I don't trust you that far," said King bluntly. "Why am I a problem? If you can trade like you say—which I don't believe—why don't you grab the loot and *safari* out in a hurry?"

The man was frankness itself and he did not hesitate.

"My dear man, you know what gold weighs. How much can one man carry through the bush, plus his absolutely necessary equipment? Nothing worth talking about. And I tell you there's enough gold, all packed in neat crane quills, for twenty loads. Now I'll admit that I dare not leave Kingi Bwana alone with no better guards than niggers while I make twenty trips to the place I have chosen as a last base; and I am not taking a *safari* of twenty witnesses with me. To dispose of them would be— In any case, only a fool would trust himself with that much gold and those insolent Nairobi niggers so close to a getaway over the border."

KING picked up the broken thread of the man's previous sentence. With silky coolness he completed it.

"To dispose of them in the good old way would mean quite a lot of good cartridges; and some might get away at that. Have you considered poisoning their water?"

This, when the man was just beginning to think he was winning King over. His patience gave out to the extent of showing his teeth.

"You are very smart, Mr. King. And let me remind you that I'm not such a fool as to take any chances with you. Now, either you come in with me; you implicate yourself or—"

In his enthusiasm the man rose from his stool and strode a short walk up and down the hut. Unconsciously avoiding the arc of the wall, he came closer to the chained man than he knew.

King's swift action followed upon his lightning thought. Like a sliding base runner taking the utmost advantage of his length, he threw himself in a long reach for the man's ankle.

His own ankle jerked agonizingly against his leg shackle. His hands fumbled in the dimness round the big man's boot. The latter, surprisingly fast for his bulk, snatched his foot away, kicked the stool over toward King. King received a solid crack on the head for his pains, and the man was out of reach once more.

King felt rather than saw that a gun was pointing at him while the man stood tense, watching. Finding King secure, he laughed nastily.

"Dashed clever, eh? But I'm not altogether a fool myself, Mr. Kingi Bwana. Good Lord, what a stiff necked ass you are! But you'll be all the more useful if you'll see sense. Don't be a fool, man. I'm offering you a small fortune."

"No luck." King recovered his position, squatting against the hut wall and felt at his ankle gingerly.

His drawl was as unconcerned as though he had but lost a point in a game, and as judicious as though it were he who was dictating terms.

"I'm not being a fool. It's you who's a fool; and I'll tell you why I won't throw in with you. Now I'm no supporter of your grandma government; but in this business the government way is right. The good old way has been tried by your kind of trader for a hundred years, and what's the result? Just those fresh Nairobi niggers that you dare not take a chance with. They've learned that there's

some white men that's just men who happen to be white.

"No siree! Your British colonial government has pulled plenty boners; but its policy in Africa is right. It's the square deal for the black man that makes the white man stand out as white. It's white man's prestige that let's you and me and the missionary come to this place and keep our scalps. I don't give a hoot whether the next generation of colonial administrators are British sons or Zulu sons. That should be one of *your* patriotic worries. But I'm sure that if you gyp this Tembe village, you won't be able ever to come back; neither will I; neither will the missionary—nor any other white man without a military guard."

"You talk like a damned missionary yourself," snarled the man. "Who the devil wants to come back to this filthy hole, once we've made our haul out of it?"

"Well," said King, "I'm living in Africa just at present; and there's a whole lot of white folks aiming to live here all their lives. And it's only white man's prestige that'll let that little handful do it—especially now, after that fool war. I'm no hairy philanthropist about the future of your colony; but I've got to be free to prowl around and pull my fortune out of this country yet."

"You fool!" stormed the man. "I'm offering you a small fortune out of this trade."

"How d'you know this crowd is so anxious to be gypped?" King asked disconcertingly. "Why should Chief Tembe take up your gyp proposition rather than deal with me on a square basis? I've just got to holler my offer and the whole village will hear it."

The man's laugh out of the dimness was a gurgle of sheer delight.

"You persist in underestimating me, my dear chap. Nobody other than the chief would have sense enough to understand. My very good friend Tembe knows that according to authorized procedure every man would weigh out his gold and get the authorized trade for himself. What would he get out of it? He's no gold digger; he's the fat bellied chief. Whereas, dealing with me, he gets the whole payment and gives his silly people whatever he thinks right. That's the good old way. Trader gets something worthwhile for his risk; chief gets some first class beads and knives and everybody is happy. Furthermore, my clever Kingi Bwana—" the unction in the voice was positive oil of self-satisfaction — "he will deal with me and not with you because I have taken the precaution to marry three of his daughters—native fashion, of course; it doesn't tie me up in any way but these poor fools don't know that and it puts me, as you Yankees say, in pretty solid."

"You filthy polecat!" King's blazing speech came after a long moment of astound and disgust. "You poor white offal! It's your stinking kind that smears the white man in the dirt. You're one of those leper lice who'll stick at nothing to get what you want. Taking a shot at a man out of the dark don't sicken me—heaps of fellers who rate not much lower'n hyenas have done it. But this marrying into a savage tribe is the lowest—"

"That's enough. Shut up, damn you!" The command was an ugly growl.

"It's not enough!" King shouted. "I'm telling you one per cent. of what you are. You're— Hell, I know what you are. I got it now. I got that funny accent of yours. I'd been figurin' you were the lowest Britisher loose. But I know now. You're not British at all. You're a yellow belly, that's what you are. A Eurasian, a half caste from India or somewhere down the Cape. You've got the tar brush. Sure you'd marry a nigger family; they're your kind. Trouble is you look whitish an' your stink smears all of us."

A choked scream of rage came from the man, and King could see the glint of high lights on the gun. He jeered at both.

"Put it away. Hide it, cur! You haven't the guts to shoot. You'd take a secret shot out of the dark; but you daren't even hook finger over trigger, now.

Too many people know I'm here and you're here. Put it up, yellow belly!"

King was damnably right and the big man knew it. With an inarticulate bellow he ducked quickly through the low door opening and his footsteps told that he almost ran.

King sat back against the wall of the hut and panted. Broken interjections at intervals showed his indignation. Then, at last, he grinned.

"Phew! Forgot myself that time. Now he'll stay away and hatch some particularly slick meanness. I was a fathead. I should ha' made to fall in with his game. But, hell—there's a limit! Wonder what he'll do? He's damn right he daren't trek out an leave me under nothing less dumb than native guards; he knows I'd be outa here like a rabbit. If he'll just lie still and give me a couple hours, I'll be outa here anyhow!"

He fished his pipe from his pocket, swore softly as he remembered that he had no matches; then, caressing the fine carving on the stem with loving fingers, he composed himself with a feline patience to wait for the appearance of his Hottentot. His captor, he knew, would now quite surely not send the servant to wait on his master; but King had great confidence in the wizened little jungle man's native cunning, a cunning that he had been at pains to develop through many years of close training. Of the man's loyalty he was sure.

YET IT was noon before the Hottentot appeared. Like a djinn of fantastic fable diving for its dark hole he ducked suddenly through the doorway and was within the hut. And like a djinn he was miraculous. Instead of the ragged old shooting coat that was his customary raiment he appeared in a wide frocked coat and tight pants of cotton goods that were near white; and in his hands he carried a tray upon which was food, sumptuous fare of rice and curried chicken.

For just a fleeting instant King thought that his captor was mean spirited enough to have swallowed all insults and was still hoping to placate him. Then in the next second he knew better.

"Tell the tale swiftly," he said.

The Hottentot set down the tray and embraced his master's knees.

"*Bwana*, I could not come before. The order was that no man should speak with you till that white man gave leave; and two great fellows stand before this door with spears. That white man is very strong with the chief and his orders are the chief's orders. The chief is a strong chief over his people. That white man lives in the *mon-perea's* mission house with his women; and *bwana's* guns are also there. All this day have I tried to steal them; but I have been caught and beaten. At noon that white man eats food such as this; he had a servant of the Banyan people who prepare it."

"Hm," grunted King. "I was right. He's a Eurasian from British India. But what of the servant?" A suspicion was coming to King. "These are Banyan clothes. Tell the tale."

"*Bwana*, it is all told. That white man ate, and it is his custom after food to sleep like a bush pig. The servant was preparing to eat his own meal of the surplus, but I said, 'Shall this low fellow eat while my *bwana m'kubwa* hungers?' And I took it from him and brought it. I took also his clothes so that I might come saying, 'That white man sends food to the prisoner.' Those great fellows at the door are oafs of this village."

"And the servant?" asked King softly. "He gave you all these things?"

"*Bwana*, he called me ill names and came to hunt me from the cook hut with a broom, calling loudly for his master. So, *bwana*, I ripped him open with his own cook knife and took the things."

King was silent awhile.

"That was ill done, little devil ape."

"Nay, *bwana*, it was well done. The body I stuffed into the wood box and covered with fire wood; and I spread ashes over the place where his bowels fell. No man going to look for him will know."

"It was ill done," repeated King. "The

man was but a servant. Yet again it was well done, for now the way is clear. There will be six sticks of tobacco—not for the doing but for the quick thinking."

"*N'koosa, bwana!*" The Hottentot stooped again to clasp his master's knees. "Yes, *bwana*, the way is clear. By nightfall I shall have dug this stake out with this good cook knife and *bwana* will then walk forth to slay mightily with the club."

"You've a fine imagination," was King's muttered answer. "But there is an easier way and a surer. The chief is a strong chief over his people; but no man is so strong that there is not a stronger. Listen carefully, now, thou wise ape. What was it that the *mon-perea's* impudent boy said about the witch doctor of this village?"

"Ow, the witch doctor. *Bwana* asked the question and the boy said that the wizard knew the magic of the *muavi* poison ordeal."

"Good. Take now this, my pipe, and go to this witch doctor. Show him the carving of the stem and tell him that it was carved by Batete the Old One, the witch doctor of the Elgon Mountain. Let him take the carving in his hand and let him read the magic of it. It will be sufficient."

"Ow, Batete the Old One!" The Hottentot's eyes rolled white. "*Bwana* is indeed the friend of that one. *Bwana* has many magics. *Bwana* himself is *tagati m'kubwa*. His strength is as *ingaga* the gorilla. His wisdom is—"

"Cut out the chatter and beat it," said King gruffly.

"I go with speed."

King composed himself to wait once more—to plan just what he would do when he should be free. That big Eurasian was no fool; he would not be easily caught napping. He had all the guns, too. Planning and careful replanning were certainly in order.

He had plenty of time to plan. The afternoon dragged on. Footsteps came and went past the prison hut. The guards grunted at each other in monosyllables. They were changed. These also grunted. The swift dusk of African evening came. The patter and sniff of prowling dogs circled the hut, broke into shrill yelpings as they caught the alien scent.

It was not till the door opening had faded to a low, dim oval that soft footsteps stopped at the hut. Mumbled words came. Explosive grunts of surprise from the guards. Footsteps went softly away. A figure shrouded in a blanket ducked through the opening. A monkey form hopped excitedly behind it. The shrouded figure silently felt for King's hand; pressed his priceless pipe into it; with it a cold, rough, three cornered rod; silently still it ducked under the door opening again and was gone. The monkey form chattered in incoherent excitement.

"*Bwana*, that was a great magic of the carving. I showed it and he spoke a word here and a word there and men obeyed. All is prepared. The guards have gone. Only it took much time to steal this iron from the house of the *mon-perea*, where that white man now calls in a rage for his servant to make speed with the night meal."

King's blood was racing through his veins. Action at last! His thin, tuneless whistle broke through his teeth. The links of that chain were strong enough to withstand any bare handed wrenching and twisting; but to a file they presented only ten minutes work—and it was a new file. King let alone the shackle round his ankle; he concentrated on the first link. The shackle could wait till later. In less than ten minutes he stood up.

"Come," he said in a short, hard voice.

THE BIG MAN sat in a sagging camp chair in the living room of the mission house and ground his heels into the mat that covered the split bamboo floor raised on stilts four feet above the ground. The only other room was the bedroom, separated from the living room by a split bamboo partition daubed with mud. In the low thatched veranda outside a kero-

sene lantern hung. In the cluster of servant's huts fifty yards away the white man's native boys cowered from his rage and muttered obscene insults about him to one another.

Suddenly the white man stopped his cursing to listen. Something shuffled gently outside the living room window hole which had never known glass. Something pulled gently at the square of print cloth that made a curtain. The white man put his big hands on the leather strap arms of his chair and pushed himself softly to his feet. The bamboo floor creaked horribly. There was a scuffle at the window, a wild clutch that tore the print cloth from its bamboo rod, and then running footsteps through the dark. With a bellow of rage the white man hurled himself at the window, vaulted through and dashed after the running steps.

At the corner of the house a fist like a hoof hit him full in the throat and sprawled him, choking and gagging, on the ground.

"Fool," said King's very quiet voice. "You caught me once with that rope trick in the *donga*. This one of getting somebody else to do the running away evens us up."

The fist was in the big man's shirt collar, hoisting him to his feet.

"That much for the rope," said King. "Now I owe you something for knocking me on the head."

The fist let go of the shirt collar and smashed against the big man's ear, sending him lurching against the house wall.

"And for chaining me by the leg," continued King with methodical enumeration of wrongs. "And listen, you big hog, don't start getting any idea that this is a fight. If you do I'll let go and split you wide open with my two hands. It isn't a fight. It's just a plain beating up . . .

"Kaffa, little monkey man, bring that lantern so that I may see the places where I haven't hit him yet—and tell his boys to come and watch how we handle this kind of white man."

The big man, eyes boggling with surprise, tortured with pain, made a desperate attempt to fight back, to use his weight in bull-like rushes.

"What did I tell you?" said King—*smash!* "I'm not fighting with you." *Bang!* "There's some things I don't fight with." *Slam!* "I'm plain beating you up because I don't like you." *Smack!* "And for disgracing the white man—that one's for your first marriage." *Crash!*

And methodically and very thoroughly King proceeded to beat the man while his native boys leaped and whooped their derision and his native women screeched in the background.

Till King could hoist the fellow to his feet no longer.

"There," he said, breathing hard. "I figure a whole lot of white men are even with you now . . . Hey, there, one of you boys throw water on his face. Kaffa, go get my guns from inside the house; and you yourself carry his guns."

The man sat up, moaning, feeling in anguish at his puffed and cut face, dripping a steady stream of blood from his smashed nose all over his front. An unlovely and most unimposing sight.

"Speed it up," King ordered tersely. "Get a move on before I kick you up. We're going on a visit, you and I. Hey, there, you boys, go and tell Chief Tembe his son-in-law is coming to see him."

The man, battered as he was and blear eyed, stared at the sheer effrontery of the thing. It was not possible that this hard grinning person, having once escaped, and with his further getaway open before him, should thrust himself through narrow gullies lined with hostile huts into the very heart of the enemy stronghold.

But King was quietly going ahead, pushing the man before him, his mouth wide and set, his eyes very cold and hard and narrow.

The Hottentot led the way with the lantern through the filth strewn alleys of the village. Shadowy forms lurked behind every hut. White eyeballs peered. Silence descended as the little procession came. Furtive jabbering broke out when it had passed.

THERE were perhaps some hundred and fifty men of fighting age in that village. Half an hour ago they would have rushed screaming to the kill on the order of that big fellow who had married into the family of their chief. Now nobody made a hostile move. Another kind of white man dominated the situation. Quietly he walked, slowly; no gun in his hand—pistol in holster and rifle slung over his shoulder. He looked coolly about him—not timorously to avert attack—easily, almost smilingly.

Many of the natives had seen that kind of bearing before; and those who had not seen had heard of this amazing thing that the white men alone could do. Exactly so was the manner of the white men whose prestige had taken Africa and who with only prestige to carry them held the African millions.

The big, battered man broke under the inexorable progress. He made a desperate appeal on what, to him, were the most powerful of all motivations.

"For God's sake, Mr. King, don't go through with this—this awful humiliation. I'll give you half my share of—I'll give—you can have it all! I warn you, you devil, if you go on you will bring the chief into derision before all his people, he being the father of—of those three women. You'll never get a chance at that gold; not a single quill will you ever see. Good God, man, can't you understand?"

"Shut up," said King. "There's some things more important than quills with yellow dust in them—which you'll never understand. Keep moving."

The little procession came to the center of the village. Chief Tembe had received ample warning. He sat on the ceremonial stool before his hut, a group of lesser chiefs behind him, spear men at their flanks holding torches. He tried to look dignified, but succeeded only in looking fat and surly.

King brought his battered and bedraggled prisoner close into the light.

"Tell your father-in-law," he ordered, "first, the missionary is coming back."

Sullenly the big man obeyed.

"Tell him," continued King mercilessly, "that you are not a full white man." The prisoner stiffened. King laid a hand on the back of his shirt collar. "Tell him, or I'll beat you into pulp right before the whole gang." The man wilted, shuddered, and at last in broken mumbles condemned himself before the assembly.

"You have heard," said King to the chief. "A white man does not do the things that he has done. It is enough."

Slowly the little procession turned and went back through the alleys of filth between the serried huts, leaving, without ever once looking back, the raging chief of a hundred and fifty fighting men.

Not a warrior lifted spear. Not a voice shouted insult out of the dark.

"What are you going to do?" asked the big man very meekly.

"Well—" King squared his shoulders and laughed—"I'm going to take you in to Assistant Commissioner Fawcett."

The man moaned a plea for mercy.

"Shut up," said King. "I'm not going to tell him it was you who took a shot at me. I figure I'm plenty square with you for that. I'm just going to turn you in for marrying native, and he'll probably ship you back to your own country where the white man lost his standing long ago. I may never see any of that gold, but I'll allow that those coons have had a lesson so some other white man'll get a clean break for it—and that's the important thing that *you'll* never understand!"

With his promise of not bringing any charge more serious than miscegenation King caught a sudden wild gleam of hope in his prisoner's eyes. He laughed softly.

"And," he added unhurriedly, "don't get to having any pipe dream, my very clever friend, about pulling off any getaway some night. I'm carrying a strong leg shackle with me right now and I'm just betting you've got the key. You're going to sleep for the next few nights on trek chained by the leg to a stake in the ground. And thanks much for the lesson. It's one of the neatest and safest tricks I've ever learned."

The CAMP-FIRE

A free-to-all meeting place for readers, writers and adventurers

AN INTERESTING letter relative to General Rafael de Nogales' narratives of the late war as fought on the Eastern Front:

Calgary, Alberta

Apropos of General de Nogales' Turkish Sketches which have been appearing periodically, I wonder if you would ask him whether he was in the Turkish force which made a demonstration in front of Bir el-Saba on the morning of October 28, 1917. We held the line Rashid Bek, El Buggar, Hill 720, Hill 630 with the City of London Yeomanry, supported by the Hants Battery R.H.A. The 53rd division was in reserve.

I was forward observing officer for the battery and almost got into a jackpot when just before daybreak I rode jauntily through the front line (unknown to me and the holders of the line) with my horseholder and two signalers, and when dawn broke found myself facing, at a very short distance, some 1200 Turkish infantry and cavalry. I remember noticing the commander and his staff poring over a plane-table, but didn't take time to notice anything more except that a troop of cavalry was being detached to chase me. They didn't catch me, however, as my head start enabled me to get behind a hill, and once under cover our horses made real time back to where we should have been in the first place.

OWING to faulty communications we were unable to bring our battery to bear on the enemy until too late to stop them from overrunning post 720 and killing all but three men, who were taken prisoners, and who, no doubt, gave General de Nogales and his comrades a very good idea that something important

was due to happen in the Bir-el-Saba neighborhood before long.

I would like to get the General's reaction on this particular portion of the 1917 campaign. His remarks concerning the stiff rearguard action between the Turkish 3rd Lancers and the 2nd Australian L. H. Brigade, assisted by the 7th mounted Brigade, in the December 15th issue brought back memories which I had laid away for years. I think he is mistaken as to the number of British regiments. I remember only about five or six regiments supported by the Ayrshire battery taking part in the Dhaheriyeh fighting from Nov. 2 to Nov. 5. However, it doesn't matter. The Turk was a lovely fighter and a fine fellow. General de Nogales could have picked much worse company.

—J. H. R. THOMSON

Incidentally, I've received several letters querying General Nogales' implication in his recent article, "Gun Running on the Spanish Main," that the Mayas of Central America still go in for human sacrifice. From the General, the point having been brought to his attention, comes the following corroboration.

Reno, Nevada

During my recent trip to Chan Santa Cruz, or Santa Cruz del Bravo, as that Maya stronghold is called today, General May, the supreme chief of the Maya Indians, confirmed in the presence of several persons my statement that the Maya warriors only spared the Mexican musicians: the rest of the Mexican prisoners being chopped down mercilessly (*eran sacrificados a machetazos*) in front of the ruined cathedral of Chan Santa Cruz and, preferably, beneath one of the churchbells which hangs still from "the" tree in front of the entrance of said sanctuary. I am enclosing a picture of General May and myself standing in front of said bell.

The fact that the Maya Indians worship the Cross and call it "Santo" (the Holy) does not imply by any means that they worship also Christ or that they are even nominally Catholics. By "Santo" they really mean the Sun, the most holy deity of their ancestors. Anybody who has witnessed a religious service in the Maya church of Chan Santa Cruz may readily understand that those Indians are not Catholics but idolaters in every sense of the word.

—RAFAEL DE NOGALES

Some of you Central American readers ought to have some additional stories on this subject. Let's hear from you—the Camp-fire columns are open.

A WORD from Volney G. Mathison in connection with his story, "Alaskan Shanghai," in this issue. Mr. Mathison, who has had several stories in *Adventure*, notably that shivery mining-mystery tale, "Digger Fool Brunn," used to write under the name of Dex Volney, but for the future he intends to use the new one, which happens to be his real one.

New York, N. Y.

The sailing of the cod dory across the Pacific to San Francisco from the Shumagin Islands was actually accomplished by two disgruntled fishermen. It was in the year of the World's Fair, and an enterprising concessionist had the dory and the two old salts taken to the fair grounds to be put on exhibition. But he made the fatal mistake of advancing them a hundred dollars apiece. They went on a spree, and when they got sober found themselves far out to sea on a squarerigger bound for Australia.

—VOLNEY G. MATHISON

CHARLES H. COE, who is about as well informed concerning things Western as anybody, and who has helped us out on more than one subject before, does it once again. This time it's the "diamond hitch."

Miami, Fla.

Mr. Aiken asks in *Adventure* (Dec. 1st) for information regarding the diamond hitch as used in the United States. To save time am quoting briefly from my book, "Juggling a Rope," published by Hamley & Company, Pendleton, Oregon:

"Throwing the diamond hitch" is an expression often seen in the magazines devoted to the West. An ordinary hitch or knot is *tied*, but the diamond hitch is *thrown*. The reason for the distinction is that a diamond hitch is made with 40 to 50 feet of rope, called the "lash rope," and the running part is actually thrown back and forth over the back of the animal as the hitch is fashioned.

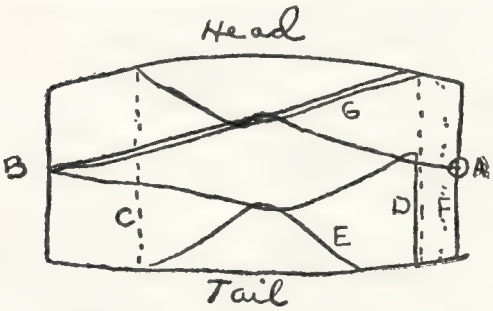
The diamond hitch is used to fasten a pack load on a mule or horse—usually the former animal. The first move in throwing it is to blindfold your mule! It is good policy not to let the natural born kicker see the rope as it is thrown back and forth. The modus operandi, in brief, is as follows:

Two men, one on each side of the animal, usually do the work. One man can do the trick, but two can do it in half the time and more conveniently. A broad and strong cincha is used to go underneath the belly of the animal. In one end of this is an iron or brass ring; in the other end is a hook, which sometimes is a natural wood growth. A, standing on one side of the animal, passes the cincha, hook end first, under its belly to B, and both men lift it up snugly. One end of the lash rope is tied in the ring by A, who now throws a loop of the rope over to B, who places it in the hook. A makes a loop out of the running part and tucks the end or bight of the loop under the rope that runs from the ring to the hook. This loop A passes around his end of the pack saddle

or *aparejo*, between the cincha and the pack (load). The loop on B's side now is placed around his end of the pack saddle and pack.

AS THE packers proceed with their work, the slack of the rope is drawn slightly taut; but in the final movements, after the hitch is loosely made, the lash rope is pulled hand-over-hand and inch-by-inch, from the very starting point, as tightly as it is possible for the two men to draw it. This tightening is what causes the mule to imagine he is being pulled apart, causing him to step lively, to say the least.

The above is a description of the commoner single diamond hitch, but sometimes an additional load is carried on top of the regular pack, in which case a double diamond hitch is best. This is tied with two smaller diamonds when completed.



A barrel is used to illustrate the drawing and the hitch. *A* is the ring; *B*, hook; *C*, dotted line, loop under the pack saddle; *D*, dotted line, loop around the other end of pack saddle; *E* is the loose end of lash rope, which goes under the saddle (dotted line) *F*, thus: .. .. ; *G*, loose end as it comes up and goes to the hook, where it is tied.

The manner of making the diamond hitch and the hitch itself are modified more or less in some sections, but the principle and its general form are the same—if it is a diamond hitch.

—CHARLES H. COE

ANOTHER note on buzzards:

Weedsport, N. Y.

I did not become interested in the discussion re the buzzard because of any admiration of that disgusting bird, which I have known in many lands, but from the fact that I read every word in every copy of *Adventure*, usually Camp-fire first. In the November 1st issue I note what Mr. Coe has to say about the buzzard's sense of smell. Maybe they are not gifted in that special sense or maybe their ideas of perfume is different from ours, but I would like him to tell how they identify a coming feast otherwise. Years ago in Kansas I heard an old country doctor say he could always tell when a death was impending by the buzzards which circled high in air above the house of grief.

Sometime ago I was spending the winter in a hotel in Florida which had extensive grounds and its own dairy and a lot of pigs. In the hotel at the time I mention lay a very sick woman in whom we all felt a great interest and there seemed little hope for her recovery.

Feeling much depressed one morning, I walked out into the pines to a clearing and, looking up, I saw the air filled with buzzards circling over the hotel. Memory of the old Kansas doctor's words flashed into my mind and my heart sank at the thought. But coming back via the farm grounds, I found the reason for friend buzzards interest, the men were killing a lot of pigs. Now tell me how did scores of them find it out so quickly and, let me tell you, they did not wait for it to get ripe before fighting over the offal of the massacre.

I am happy to write that our sick lady recovered.

—CHARLES C. TEALL

TWO letters out of a batch of them on the subject of a man's chances of regaining a moving ship after falling overboard. You remember such an incident occurred in Allan Vaughan Elston's story, "Mystery Ship."

The first is from a reader who had a somewhat similar, but not identical, experience, and who bases his opinion on it:

Clifton, Ariz.

May a new voice speak from the shadows?

I have noticed the controversy on the chances of the fellow who tumbled overboard in "Mystery Ship."

In 1924, I shipped out of Brisbane as ordinary seaman on the lumber schooner *Eric*, as I was heartily sick of the Labor Government in Australia and wished to see home again.

One day, while we were quite thoroughly becalmed north of the Samoas and it was hotter than the inside of a dog, I asked the captain if myself and another "O. S." might go swimming over the side for a while. The captain said yea, so I dropped what few clothes I had on and hove a line over the side.

The ship had no perceptible way on her and there wasn't a breath of air, but the line quickly trailed out astern.

The boy who was going over with me didn't like the looks of things and decided to take his bath with a bucket, but I grabbed the rope and over I went. The water felt wonderful but it certainly was passing by in a hurry!

I FOUND that my very fastest swimming (I'm far from an expert or even a good swimmer) was not enough to keep me anywhere near the ship. When I grabbed the line after having let it go for a moment, I was pulled half out of the water and skidded along on my chest or back at a rate that

gave me little time to do more than gasp an occasional breath of air.

I hate to think what would have happened had the ship been blessed with a bit of breeze.

The captain stood on the poop with a high power rifle handy on the off chance of sharks, though we hadn't seen any for several days. Finally he told me to let go of my line, float aft and come up the spanker sheet, the tail end of which he trailed over for me. I did so, and once clear of the water, had no difficulty in getting aboard but I was pounded aplenty before I hauled myself clear.

FROM that experience I am extremely doubtful about the luck a man would have in grasping a light line and hauling himself aboard a moving freighter even with the friendly assistance of a low rail and a timely wave. If he did succeed in holding on to the line, it would very possibly be at the cost of a dislocated shoulder or elbow and he certainly would have no skin left on his hands. My grip is a little better than normal for my size and weight, and it was plenty of work for me to keep hold of a 3-inch manila when the water took hold of me. And I wasn't hampered by clothes!

I've read *Adventure* for about ten years. And the older I get the better I like it. Ellsberg's "Pigboats" stood me right up in the corner and I can't see how I'll manage to wait and see how it comes out. More power to Talbot Mundy. It seems like old times to have "Jimgrim" back again!

—JAMES R. WHITING, JR.

The second comes from the author himself:

Pasadena, Cal.

I have observed the criticism of "Mystery Ship" in the current Camp-fire, offered by Captains Thompson and Dingle.

Let me say that for years I have been reading sea stories, and I have noted that they are always by seamen—seamen like Dingle, Thompson, Wetjen, Bill Adams and Joseph Conrad. They are written in a language which I, who am not a sailor, do not speak. They contain a charming fluency of nouns and verbs whose meaning I wot not of—and so years ago I conceded this dictum of fact: that while authors other than detectives may write a detective story, that while even an invalid like R. L. Stevenson may write a pirate story, only a sailor may write a story of the sea.

And yet, having journeyed as a layman on seven voyages even as did Sinbad, I found the yearning to write just one sea story strong within me. For years I resisted the yearning but finally succumbed; in all humility I offered "Mystery Ship." To get away with it, I cautiously made the viewpoint character a layman, a hopelessly ignorant landlubber who frankly did not know the difference between a capstan and a mizzen. It now appears that I did get away with all the action aboard. It is only when I threw a man into the sea and had him regain the ship that the deepwater fraternity calls my hand.

IN REBUTTAL I must state that I know of one case where the moot feat of aqua-dexterity was accomplished. In the harbor of Tarpon Springs, Florida, a sponge fishing port, I saw a fourteen year old Greek boy catch, from swimming stance, the side of a moving, low decked ship and scramble aboard. The speed I judged to be about eight miles an hour. True the boy was exceptionally waterwise; in fact made his living by diving for dimes tossed into the sea by tourists. His technique of regaining the ship seemed to be as follows: At his first grasp the jerk on his arm threw his legs nearly out of the water, just as the jerk of line on a running fish might throw a fish; before the boy was largely submerged again he caught a second and higher hold with his other hand. The resistance of the water is of course in inverse proportion to the percentage of immersion. In no case can a human body dragged through the water be likened to a bucket, the bucket being entirely submerged and full, its very shape affording a maximum of retardation.

One covers a deal of ground when he asserts that any given feat of athletics can not be done. Nine men out of ten can try to hop on or off a freight train moving at fifteen miles an hour and experience the jerk which Captain Thompson described in his criticism. Yet a brakeman does it without any jerk at all—his movement seems as light as a whisper, as graceful as the turn of a fawn. Now the man in "Mystery Ship" who performed the moot feat was of unknown origin. He came from the night and was dead within the hour. We do not know his proficiencies, whether those of gymnast, sponge diver, brakeman or whatnot. We do know that he was directly at the side of the ship, a ship whose deck was almost level with the water, and therefore that whatever he grasped was grasped by reaching vertically up and not horizontally out. The mechanics of that is evident. It can not be compared to an instance where a man a distance out from the ship grasps a nearly horizontal line. We also know that our man was struggling desperately for his life, and that the arm of despair is always mighty.

—ALLAN VAUGHAN ELSTON

THE suggestion Mr. Walbridge makes in the following letter is an excellent one, and I hereby request that readers in foreign countries aid in the preparation of such a circulation list. To supplement it, I shall try to procure from our Foreign distribution department a list of the places where the magazine can be obtained in the more important centers of the world. This I shall print as soon as it's available.

However, the far, out of the way places of the world would be most interesting to

hear from—small stations that possibly never appear on circulation sheets. It would give us an idea of how amazingly widespread (as some of us already know) is the reading of our magazine.

London, England

One of the drawbacks of foreign travel is the difficulty of finding *Adventure*. I had been in London two weeks before I found them at a little hole in the wall on Greene St., near Leicester Square.

The man at the Adlon in Berlin said he usually had them but was out of them, and I couldn't find any elsewhere in Germany.

In Paris they are on sale in the kiosks on the "Grand Boulevards" and at Brentanos but nowhere else in France.

I got them at a little kiosk near the post-office in Venice, and in Florence near the Duomo, but not in Rome or elsewhere in Italy. Nor in Vienna nor Cairo, etc.

WHY don't you ask *Adventure* fans to send in the result of their scouting in this respect and then publish as full a list as possible two or three times a year?

There are doubtless places in the above cities that I have missed, as well as places in other cities.

—G. H. WALBRIDGE

A NOTE about cyclones, typhoons and whirlwinds:

Detroit, Michigan

I was somewhat interested in a recent discussion in your magazine about cyclones, waterspouts, etc. Some one was rather skeptical about some of the stories being told: A sailor often gets a reputation for telling yarns that landlubbers refuse to believe when in fact he is only describing well known natural phenomena.

Cyclones, typhoons, whirlwinds all follow natural laws and are all very similar in action. Besides the whirling round and round of the air, there is a horizontal travel of the whole body of the storm which describes a circular path of small or wide arc—the larger the storm generally the wider the arc. The general direction of travel is always the same north of the equator; similarly but in different direction of course, south of the equator.

Navigating officers are able to tell by watching the barometer and noting the direction of the wind, in which direction the storm center is and often turn tail and run from it. Nowadays practically all the big storms of this kind are foretold by wireless, so that any vessel is able to make for the nearest snug harbor. Woe to the ship that gets caught in the exact center of the storm. Here is liable to be a large waterspout which will discharge tons of water on the ship's deck and send it to the bottom in a hurry.

EVERY one has some time or other seen a small whirlwind pick up a lot of dead leaves and whirl them round and round and travel with them over the ground. This is merely a cyclone in a small way. Some years ago the writer happened to be on the peak of a small mountain bordering on Manila bay in the Philippines when a storm arose out on the bay ending in a small cyclone and a waterspout. The clouds got inky black and moved down near the water; a column of water rose to meet the cloud forming an hour glass, the upper half being the black cloud and the lower half being the green water. This rotary waterspout moved about twenty miles over the bay before it burst and dissipated, the writer getting an excellent view of its travel.

The rotation of the earth on its axis has a directional effect on the larger storms. There are several places on the earth's surface that are peculiarly liable to these storms at certain periods of the year, as for instance the West Indian cyclones and the so-called typhoons of the China Sea.—C. C. CUSTER

OUR Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There are no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

Ask Adventure

For free information and services you can't get elsewhere

Serpent

THE wisdom, guile and foresight of snakes have been greatly exaggerated. They're not even wily, according to Mr. Pope, and they very likely never recognize the hand that feeds them in the zoo.

Request:—"Will you be good enough to answer a few questions, probably foolish ones, in your capacity as snake specialist? I am curious to know what emotions have been observed in snakes, if any. We frequently hear the expression 'wily as a serpent' and I should like to know in what way the snakes exhibit wisdom, guile or foresight. Possibly the legends which have been built up about the snake family have no foundation in fact, except the far-away experience of Mother Eve.

Nevertheless, it seems to be reported from reliable sources that the cobra, for instance, mates for life, which would indicate the exercise of some form of emotion. A number of good tales have been based on the theory that in the cobra some evidence of love between the male and female exists and that if one of the pair is killed the mate will seek revenge. I am sorry I have forgotten the names of the stories in which this theory is worked out, but I believe there are several of them. However, it would take too long a letter to outline the development of the emotional complexes in snakes. Possibly you can answer the questions offhand.

How is sex distinguished in snakes?

Do snakes actually exhibit any of the other emotions, such as anger or fear? I know common non-venomous snakes always wiggle away very rapidly from any one who approaches, but is there any reason to believe that that is anything but the normal desire to get away from civilized man? Likewise, in the case of poisonous snakes, acting in revenge or otherwise, is there any evidence of anger, or is this just a natural reflex action?

Do the snakes show any fear of each other? Would a python exhibit fear if forced to associate with a cobra, or would smaller snakes, say a pit full of common blacksnakes, exhibit any excitement if a large snake, such as a boa constrictor, were introduced to the community?

The rather interesting case of a python which suddenly laid three or four eggs—in San Francisco, recently—raises another question. Would it be possible for these eggs to be fertile after a snake had been in captivity for several years without relationship with the male of the same species.

Some years ago I saw the snake den in the Bronx Park Zoo. I have forgotten the time of the year, but at any rate a rock in the den was literally covered with dozens, possibly hundreds of small snakes, all intertwined and apparently covered with some glistening liquid which I assumed emanated from the snakes. The behavior of the reptiles, their appearance, and the existence of this fluid, suggested to my mind the breeding season. I asked one of the keepers about this point—I have forgotten whether he said they were breeding or whether he simply said that snakes all curled up together in that way at that particular time of the year.

As I recall it, there were several varieties of snakes in the tangle—black snakes, green snakes, garter snakes and the little red sand snake. I remember wondering, if this is a breeding action, why there is not a terribly confused crossing of the species, and this reminds me to ask you if there is any crossing of species in the snake families. Also, is there any difference in the breeding behavior of snakes as between those which bear young alive and those which lay eggs?"

—P. F. CHRISTOPHER, Cleveland, Ohio

Reply, by Mr. Clifford H. Pope:—Your letter brings up several very interesting questions, some of which I can not answer fully, but at any rate I can give suggestions that may prove helpful.

The expression "wily as a serpent" probably has its origin in early Asiatic folk lore and really has no more foundation in fact than, let us say, the alleged

evil nature of the devil. This does not mean, however, that snakes are emotionless.

Snakes exhibit fear in many ways, but I do not know how much of it is learned and how much instinctive. Certainly many species learn to tolerate gentle handling and even reach the point of taking food out of one's hand, but I doubt if they really know whose hand (as long as it is a gentle hand) feeds them. Many kinds of serpents are snake eaters, though not cannibalistic. They eat other species just as man eats a cow. In such cases neither man nor snake can be justly accused of cannibalism. Generally speaking, however, captive snakes may be freely mixed without danger of fights. I know of no snakes having fought without being prompted by appetite. Revenge is too strong a term, i.e. implies too complicated a form of reflex to be associated with the behavior of serpents.

The question of permanent mating among snakes is, as far as I know, an open one. It has been reported. It is safe to add, nevertheless, that serpents in general are exceedingly promiscuous within a species.

It goes without saying that a female snake long isolated from males would not lay fertile eggs. Snakes, except in possible cases of very closely related forms, do not cross and they are usually indifferent to the presence of large members of other kinds. You probably saw a cage full of snakes at the Zoo at a time when many of the group were shedding; hence your impression of a fluid. Pieces of loose or shedding skins might readily create such an impression. It is only very rarely that snakes can be persuaded to copulate in captivity. There are records of observations on large numbers of intertwined individuals engaged in sexual relations but such activities are for the most part performed by single pairs. During the breeding season many forms become relatively aggressive and fierce.

Snakes that lay eggs very often remain with them during incubation, but I am aware of only one record of a mother snake showing any interest in offspring born alive and that was in the case of a rattlesnake kept in captivity.

Sexing snakes is not easy because obvious external sexual differences are very rarely evident. If specimens of one species are compared it will be more or less easily noticed that in some the base of the tail is slightly swollen (males) and larger than the same region in others (females).

Motor

HOW water gets in gasoline; and how to get it out.

Request:—"Is there any way to prevent condensation in the gasoline? Water in the gasoline is caused either by water in the gasoline when purchased from the filling station or else condensation. In regard to the filling station, they usually filter their gasoline. So we will forget about that part. I drive a 1930 sedan which is equipped with a gasoline filter of the screen type. I do not think that this will filter out water in the gasoline; it will just filter out dirt. Chamois is the only thing which will separate gasoline and water. Am I right or wrong? Condensation, caused by rapid change in temperature, such as leaving the car in a warm garage, driving it out into zero weather and then allowing it to stand in an unheated garage. Is there any way whereby condensation can be prevented or its ill effects nullified? I would like some suggestions."

—ELMER HALKER, Rockford, Illinois

Reply, by Mr. Edmund B. Neil:—You are quite right that a wire screen will not separate water from gasoline; chamois, as you state, will. However, there are one or two types of gasoline filters which are capable of straining the water from gasoline which are not of the chamois type. These consist of a series of flat discs placed together in a pile some two or three inches high. The space between the discs while extremely small is sufficiently large to permit gasoline to flow through whereas water is held back.

To prevent water from entering the fuel line of a car it would be my suggestion that a gasoline filter be installed close to the tank from which the fuel is drawn or the end of the fuel line inserted at a point in the tank considerably above the bottom so that any accumulated water will not be carried to the fuel line. Many cars today have a sump in the bottom of the gasoline tank in which water condensed from within the tank can accumulate, so if the sump is drained frequently there should be no chance for water to enter the fuel line. In this connection I might say that gasoline itself will actually dissolve but a very small amount of water, so that any water in the fuel is not actually combined with the gasoline, but is carried along with it. This statement does not apply with fuels having a benzol content, for benzol will dissolve water to a greater degree than gasoline. This in turn may be condensed out of the fuel in extremely cold weather, or it might be more accurate to say "frozen out".

Boxing

TRAINING routine for an amateur bout.

Request:—"I am an amateur boxer, and am about to start another season of boxing in the city. I would like to have your advice on the following questions:

1. I start my heavy training one week before the meet. In this time what would you consider the best diet?

2. How much road work do you think is best to prepare for a ten-round bout?

3. What exercises would toughen the muscles in my stomach?

4. What would you consider a good training routine?" —HARRY HUNN, Washington, D. C.

Reply, by Capt. John V. Grombach:—1. I do not agree with the fact that you only begin your heavy training one week before a meet. I consider

that two weeks is a fairer figure. During these two weeks of heavy training your diet should be as follows, or an equivalent one:

Breakfast:	Fruit; eggs; toast; coffee. Milk if weight is no object.
Lunch:	Soup; vegetables, both green and starchy, bread and butter.
Dinner:	Vegetables, meat or fish, dessert, but not too rich. Nothing fried and no coffee except in the morning. Drinking of milk and the quantity of water to be consumed will be dependent upon your weight problem.

2. With regard to road work, in case you do not know it, the best way to do road work is one minute walking, one minute running, one minute sprinting, repeating this program again and again. An hour of such road work done in good air is quite sufficient for amateur boxing.

3. The best exercises to toughen the muscles in the stomach are as follows:

(a) Lie flat on your back with your hands by your sides, both feet together, lifting the latter slowly off the floor about one foot; slowly spread them apart, slowly bring them together again and slowly let them down until they are resting on the floor again. This done correctly should result in a terrific strain on the stomach muscles and it is wise not to do this too much at first. Begin by doing it two or three times and then increase each day.

(b) Lie flat on your back as above except arms flat overhead, palms up, fold at the waist and touch the palms of the hands with the toes of the feet, then roll forward and touch the toes of the feet with the fingers; continue.

4. Road work in the morning before breakfast; boxing and shadow boxing; bag work, both light and heavy, and bout exercises in the afternoon any time after three hours from meal would be a good training routine.

Lincoln's Half-Faced Camp

A PIONEER shelter built by Abe Lincoln's father, when Abe was a boy in Indiana over a hundred years ago. The following is a page from the last book written by the late Dr. John D. Long of the Ask Adventure staff:

Winter was coming on and there was no time to build a log cabin. So, they met the problem of shelter by building a half-faced camp.

This was done by first selecting two straight trees standing on a hillside sloping to the south, and fourteen feet apart. The trees were topped, the branches trimmed off and the trunks squared to form the front corner posts of the camp. Next, a squared log fourteen feet long was placed on top of the posts as a lintel across the front. Finally, fourteen-foot logs were pinned to the corner posts, the back ends of which ran to the hill behind. The roof was of small poles with branches thrown on them and over all was a thatch of dried grass.

Curtains of skins with the fur on hung from the lintel. These could be drawn aside like tent flaps, The logs were chinked at the cracks between them with clay and stones. There was a floor of earth, but standing on a well drained slope, the camp was dry and warm.

In front was a huge stone fireplace where a fire was kept burning all the time. This fire was used for cooking and in cold weather for warmth. At night it was a protection against prowling bears, wolves or wildcats . . .

—(Page 40. The Life Story of Abraham Lincoln. Fleming, Revell Co., New York.)

Samoa

CHAIN stores stretch across the Islands, and the bottom has dropped out of the copra market; so a newcomer of modest means will find little opportunity except as a small planter.

Request:—"I am a British subject, 33 years old, with some ready money. I have had seaman and navigation experience, having been in the British navy during the war and after. I am thinking of going to Samoa to try my luck and would appreciate some idea of conditions there.

What are the chances of getting a small plantation to raise coconuts?

I was thinking of building a shack to live in on some quiet beach or up in the mountains where no one would bother me until I could build a house.

Is it hard to get a place? Would you recommend living with natives? Would they expect much for keeping you?"

—M. TAYLOR, Los Angeles, California

Reply, by Mr. Tom L. Mills:—Let me advise you, to start with, to go cannily regarding buying or settling in the Islands. Give it the once-over first. Have a good look around. You should try before you buy. Now to answer your questions: Having ready money, I should think it quite possible for you to acquire a plantation. But I have sent your request on to our department of the interior and external affairs and asked the under-secretary to send you definite information about Samoa and your chances there. You should have the answer as soon as you get this letter.

As New Zealand has the mandate for Samoa, and there are ex-German plantations to dispose of, you might get a modest area of one hundred acres, which would be quite enough to get going with. Your job would be to raise coconuts and beef cattle. Could not advise you to go in for a trading store, as the ground is already fully exploited,

principally by big firms that have a chain of stores stretching right across the Islands and by private individuals who are old-timers.

The climate of Samoa is tropical and for the tropics not at all unhealthy, but after some years it saps the vitality of the white man and becomes harmful to his health. There is no malaria, but many skeeters and other insects, while outside Apia, the principal port and capital town, life is not particularly comfortable.

The natives are good natured and easy going, so long as the white man minds his own business and keeps aloof. A young white man—without a wife—in a native village will be a target for the handsome girls looking for marriage. The natives generally are healthy. A white man married to a native will have all her relatives coming to live with him—sponging on him. Those who have had much to do with them avow that the Samoans are pleasant fellows, but not reliable; cheeky, materialistic and by no means simple and child-like, having lots of guile.

Copra has been a drug on the market for some time and prices fluctuate. You certainly could not camp on the beach or live like a "poor white." It isn't done. There is a boarding house in Apia. Keep away from residence with natives. They would skin you and then kick you out. You would probably do a good deal better financially and socially in the U. S. A. Kia Ora!

Archery

DON'T begin with too heavy a bow.

Request:—"There are several fellows here who are becoming quite interested in archery.

We wish to know where we may buy really good equipment. We are interested in using the bow as a hunting weapon.

Want one as heavy and long as is possible to use—or don't we? We think we should start practise with whatever equipment we expect to hunt with. Are we right or wrong?

All are rather large fellows. May we have your suggestions?"

—C. I. WESTON, St. Helen, Michigan

Reply, by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—The right size bow is approximately the height of the user when strung. If you are over 5 ft. 8 in. tall, I would suggest that you get the regular 6 ft. bows.

More good archers have been spoiled at the start from trying to shoot with bows too heavy than almost any other cause.

Personally, I am little above medium size, being 5 ft. 8½ in. tall, but I have drawn as much as 165 pounds when in good training, having the reputation of drawing the strongest bow of any archer in the U. S., and I have actually shot a bow pulling 150 pounds, but for target work I use bows ranging from 40 to 48 pounds.

For hunting I do get some heavy arrows made up about the weight of the regular hunting arrows, and go out and shoot "at rovers" for hunting practise—that is shooting at various objects run up on in the course of a stroll out in the fields or woods, and at various distances, which is best practise for hunting. You will find bows of about 5 ft. 8 in. best for hunting, as they are easier to get through the brush and more convenient to carry.

There are several good tackle makers in Michigan who can supply you with good tackle. See Frank W. Mosher, Lindquist Bldg., Grand Rapids, and tell him I sent you, or see H. P. Clark at 745 Shawmut Ave , Grand Rapids, or write to Frederick W. Kibbe, at Coldwater, Mich. Any of these folks know me.

Camera

IT'S a mistake for the light traveler to develop and print his own films, especially when an autographic camera will keep his records straight no matter when or where the pictures are finished.

Request:—"Please send me some advise on self developing for films I intend making on a round the world trip on a motorcycle. I have a camera for roll film—plates and filmpack—size 3¼" x 5½"." —ALFRED HEART, Chicago, Illinois

Reply, by Mr. Paul L. Anderson:—On a motorcycle trip I would strongly advise that you do not develop your own films on the way, but that you mail them back to some reliable house in this country to be developed and printed, or else have them developed and printed by photo-finishers in the various cities through which you pass. This is because you will find even the smallest developing apparatus pretty cumbersome to carry on a motorcycle.

Also, I would suggest that if your camera is not of the autographic type, you get an autographic back and use autographic films; this will help keep your records straight.

Terra Nova

BRITAIN'S most ancient and loyal colony—Newfoundland—is neither part nor parcel of Canada, if you please.

Request:—"1. Who is Newfoundland named after?

2. Who first landed on the coast of Newfoundland?

3. Is Labrador a part of it?

4. Is it a British possession or not?"

—DANIEL GRAVELINE, Detroit, Michigan

Reply, by Mr. C. T. James:—1. Newfoundland is not named after any individual. Cabot, its discoverer, styled it Terra Nova or the New Land, subsequently further anglicized to Newfoundland, but in all ancient documents and in the archaic

science of heraldry Terra Nova is used to define it.

2. Tradition goes back to Leif Ericson, the great and hardy Viking adventurer—11th century—but history tells us, and there is documentary evidence to prove it, that Newfoundland was discovered by John or Sebastian Cabot, Genoese navigators residing in Bristol, England, under commission from the merchants of Bristol, in a ship called the *Matthew* manned by English sailors, the landfall being made on St. John the Baptist's day, June 24th, 1497.

3. Labrador, covering that portion of the coast line from Blanc Sablon to Cape Chidleigh, with the hinterland, 120,000 square miles, belongs to and is administered by Newfoundland.

4. Yes. Has autonomous government and is neither part nor parcel of the Dominion of Canada, politically. In fact Newfoundlanders resent it when their letters are addressed "Newfoundland, Canada". Newfoundland is Britain's first overseas possession and is known everywhere as "the most ancient and loyal colony".

Spider

MORE about the Black Witch, whose body is so ominously marked with an hourglass design. It may not be deadly, but no one is willing to experiment personally with its bite. So it remains a problem for the scientists.

Request:—"More regarding your letter in the Oct. 1st issue of *Adventure* pertaining to spiders.

Is the Black Witch spider you refer to the same as the one we call the Black Widow? These are very common in California. Recently in the newspaper an account appeared of a man in the northern part of the State who had to have 41 skin grafts due to the bite of a Black Widow spider. Also have noticed other accounts of deaths occurring due to the bite of this insect.

Upon reading these reports I went to the public library and got a copy of the 'Spider Book' and the author seems to evade the question as to whether the bite of this spider is fatal or not, stating that entomologists are inclined to believe they are non-poisonous, further stating that no one has ever kept the spider that bit them and they had no proof that it was the Black Widow and reiterating the statement that they were inclined to believe they were harmless.

I wish you would give me your opinion if you believe they are harmless or not (deadly); as I said before, there are any number of them in my garden and if you would like a specimen I will get out my C Cl_4 and send you one.

Dr. Paislee, under whom I studied entomology at the University of Chicago one summer, makes the same claims about the tarantula as you do.

I forgot to mention the Black Widow has the hourglass, in red, on its abdomen."

—C. WARREN TRAYLOR, Los Angeles, California

Reply, by Dr. S. W. Frost:—The Black Witch referred to in the October 1st issue of *Adventure* is the same as the Black Widow of California and Southeastern United States.

I have had but occasional acquaintance with this spider. My opinion concerning the danger from the Black Widow is similiar to that expressed by Riley and Johannsen in "Medical Entomology"; in speaking of this and related species they state they "may (probably exceptionally and depending upon exceptional conditions) bring about the death of a human being." This is as you wrote, very indefinite, but that is just our position concerning the danger of this and similiar spiders.

The difficulty rests upon the fact that no one cares to subject himself wilfully to the bite of this spider and even then such data would not be conclusive, because people's vitality and susceptibility vary. The majority of the records that come to light are questionable as to the species of spider concerned, also whether the injurious effects were produced by the spider or by infection at the time of the bite.

Under such circumstances, no entomologist or arachnidist cares to make definite statements. Under very unusual conditions serious injury might result. Remember that it takes very little sometimes to interfere with man's delicate anatomy. For example, under ordinary conditions a bee sting is not serious; still I know a woman who would die from complications resulting from a bee sting if no one were present at the time to assist her.

Voluminous accounts occur in technical papers concerning the effect of the poison of spiders. The poison of the Black Widow (*Latrodectus mactans*) has been extracted and introduced into cats, dogs, guinea pigs and various other animals with no serious results. Scientists have found that the poison of the Black Widow paralyzes the heart and central nervous system and, if the quantity of poison which enters the blood is large, hemolysis and death might result.

To sum the matter up, there is no definite record of man being killed by the bite of the Black Widow. I would be very glad to have a specimen in my collection.

The Mounted

AMERICANS have slipped into the R.C.M.P, but with the present waiting list it seems useless for any but bona fide British subjects to apply.

Request:—"I would like to know the qualifications, and where I would apply for enlistment in the Mounted Police.

I am at present a soldier and have been in the Service since the first of the late War."

—SGT. A. J. QUINN, Fort Sill, Oklahoma

Reply, by Mr. Patrick Lee:—Strictly speaking, applicants for enlistment in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police must be British subjects, between

the ages of 19 and 32. At times when men were needed and recruiting officers were not strict, some Americans joined the force merely by giving Canadian home addresses, just as they did in the World War before the U. S. entered the scrap. However, just at the present time there are few vacancies and a great many applications. The only way to get in is to apply in person, and get some good Canadian references.

The force gets thousands of applications from Americans, many of whom would not have a chance even if they were British subjects. A letter to the commissioner in Ottawa usually brings nothing more than a formal reply to the effect that your name has been placed on the waiting list. That's as far as it goes.

For your information, enlistment is for three years, with the option of rejoining for further periods of one or three years. Pay for constables is $2 a day with maintenance. There is a fair chance for promotion, and practically all the officers have risen from the ranks. Usually, recruits are sent to the training depot, Regina, Sask., for a few months before being assigned to duty. The training there is much the same as that of a cavalry regiment, plus training in police work. Furlough for men in isolated posts is on the basis of two months with pay for every three years, and an additional month without pay may be obtained. Discharge may be purchased at any time, subject to the approval of the commissioner, on the basis of $5 for every unexpired month of service, minimum $75. There is a small service pay after the first three years. Corporals get $2.50 and sergeants $3 a day. Liberal allowances are made for traveling and there is special pay for certain types of duty.

WITH deep regret the editors announce the death of Frank Earnest, for a long time *Ask Adventure* expert on sheep and cattle raising. Boy and man, he knew the West first-hand; and the many readers whom he advised on the subject of homesteading can testify to his sincerity as well as his authority.

Our Experts—They have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

They will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assume any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible.

1. **Service**—It is free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached*, are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union. Be sure that the issuing office stamps the coupon in the left-hand circle.

2. **Where to Send**—Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular section whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. DO NOT send questions to this magazine.

3. **Extent of Service**—No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.

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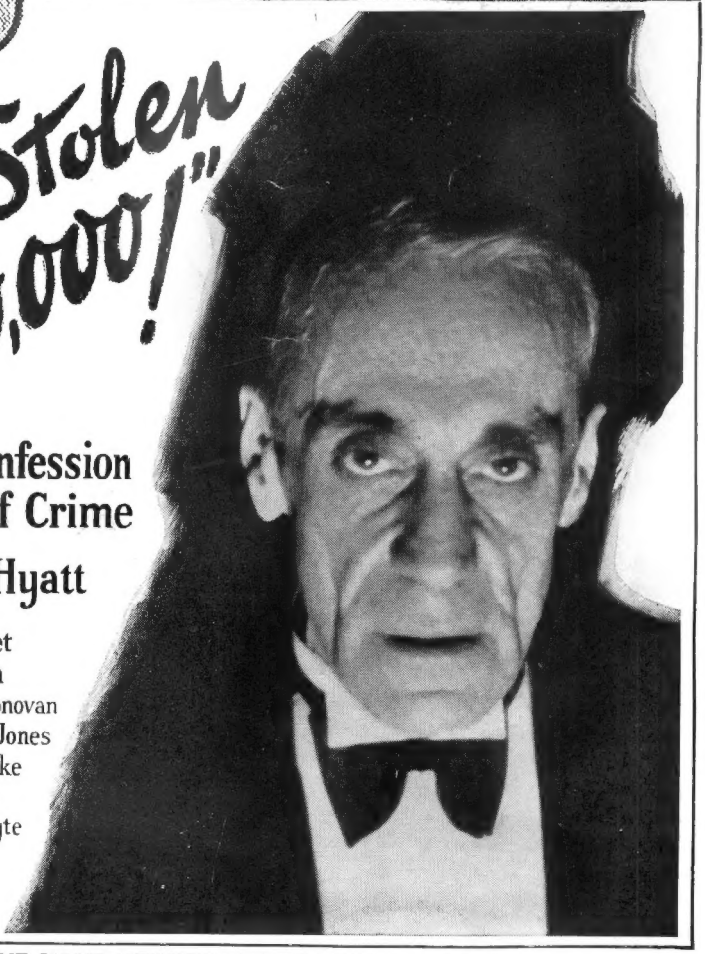

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